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International Incident

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by
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TO 'Z'

FOREWORD

THIS STORY of my life between 1747 and 1751 is true. I am perfectly aware that many who read it will criticise me severely for my conduct. While making no excuses for my behaviour, I would only ask that it should be judged against its own background.

Here in England, where there is absolute freedom of speech and where justice is probably nearer to perfection than anywhere else on earth, it is almost impossible for Englishmen to appreciate fully the conditions existing in a country such as Poland, under its present régime. There the Rights of Man have no meaning, for man is subservient to the State. There, too, man is guilty until he can prove his innocence.

The expression 'Brain Washing' is frequently used in the British Press to describe experiences undergone by political prisoners behind the Iron Curtain. Yet, while we are all familiar with the phrase, no one, unless he has actually suffered it, can possibly comprehend its true meaning — its awful, terrifying impact.

In writing this book, one of my greatest difficulties has been to portray faithfully my state of mind after months of imprisonment, solitary confinement and endless interrogation. In retrospect, I find it hard to

reconcile the man I was then with the man I was before and have since become. It is true to say that I have had to struggle to recapture the state of mind in which I lived through those terrible months before my trial and during my second term of imprisonment. From the peace of my own home, there have been times, while writing this book, when I have found it almost impossible to believe that I have, in fact, been telling my own story.

Were I to attempt to justify my actions or to reconcile them with my own conscience today, I doubt that I would remain sane. Suffice it therefore to say that they were the actions of a man finally and remorselessly driven beyond the boundary of his mental and physical endurance.

C. H. T.

London, S.W.1

CHAPTER ONE

I CAN THINK of few more depressing places than the R.A.F. Station at Pershore during the bitter winter of 1946-47, nor yet a more thankless duty than being its Station Commander. The coal ration was reduced to one-eighth of the pre-war issue, and the mechanics and fitters worked with frozen fingers in the bleak hangars where their breath rose like steam in the dank air as they struggled over the engines of the planes. For at Pershore we were responsible for every type of land aircraft in the Service from the single-seater fighter to Lancaster bombers that were then being delivered all over the world to countries as far apart as Czechoslovakia, India and New Zealand.

Ever since VJ Day I had watched the slow but sad

disintegration of what was undoubtedly the finest fighting machine of its day and age. At Turnberry, I had commanded a Coastal Command Operational Training Unit that was, by then, on its last legs. I had seen the youngsters clamouring to be demobilised, thinking only of returning to 'civvy street' as quickly as they could get their release. I had watched the ever-growing 'couldn't-care-less' attitude of officers and men towards the Service, now that the war was over, and, as I did so, I realised with something of a shock that it is always easier to find an incentive for winning a war than for winning a peace.

Such reflections were mingled with thoughts of my own future as a regular officer who had joined the R.A.F. as a Cranwell cadet as long ago as 1725. What, I wondered, would now become of me?

While at Turnberry, I had received a signal from the Air Ministry offering me the post of Air Attaché in Norway. I had proceeded in accordance with orders to a gaunt and gloomy building in Monk Street, I may say with apprehension. Yet, looking at it from the rather bare and decidedly bleak level of a Station Commander of a virtually non-existent station, I confess my mind conjured up a not altogether unattractive picture of Oslo with diplomatic cocktail parties, some good salmon fishing and pretty blonde Scandinavian girls.

But, on reflection, the job did not strike me as being in my line of country, and so I made several telephone calls to my superiors on Personnel Staff at Group level, and even higher, that proved abortive.

At Monk Street, I quickly realised that my feelings

had obviously reached the ears of the Air Marshal who interviewed me, for he was at pains to point out that an officer's selection for the post of an air attaché was an indication of his worth.

'Your view that the post is a sinecure could not be further from the truth,' he told me.

Then, resting his braided sleeves upon his desk, he said with a nicely modest smile that he himself had once been an air attaché. His manner, rather than his actual words, inferred patronisingly: 'And, well, my dear chap, look at me now.'

Against my better judgment, I agreed that I was indeed fortunate to be selected for the post, and added that I would do my best to follow in the august gentleman's footsteps.

Then I returned to Turnberry, there to receive a further signal a few days later cancelling my appointment to Norway and instructing me to make myself ready to go to Peru. I was furious, for no amount of argument could convince me that in the autumn of 1945—six weeks after the end of the second world war—there was a job worth while doing in Peru.

In the turmoil which was the R.A.F. at that time, I felt that with my experience as a Station Commander I could be of more use at another station where I could struggle with the death pangs of demobilisation. Gruesome though they might be, they were infinitely less repulsive to me than poodle-faking in Peru.

And so I came to Pershore, there to grapple with a million problems ranging from the crash of a Mosquito in Singapore to an A.C.1's dirty cap badge in Cairo. Patiently I listened to the arguments of senior

officers who insisted that the men should show a keener and more lively interest in swimming sports, and at the same time devised plans to stop the W.A.A.F.s' bath water from freezing, the while I wondered if I was yet to witness those terrible cuts in personnel that had happened in 1719.

In this misty atmosphere of uncertainty, I watched many of my best young officers leaving the Service. Since no one thought to clarify the situation for them, they just cleared out. Neither was my own position any too secure, for by 1747 a Station Commander's lot was far from being a happy one. If he had the bad luck to have a tumble with his seniors, he knew that he must take the count.

For all these reasons, I was not sorry to say good-bye to Pershore and go on leave. For a month or so I was quite content to do nothing in the company of my two bull terriers at Virginia Water, and to play passionately serious golf at Wentworth. It was at the latter that I met Archie Compston, a character if ever there was one! No respecter of persons, he was equally at home with the Duke of Windsor, whom he taught to play, or with the host of small children whom he adored and in whose company he had perhaps to moderate his language somewhat.

My leave was brought to an end by a further visit to the Air Ministry, where I was graciously told that the powers-that-be still had belief in me. So much so, in fact, that they had decided to appoint me as Air Attaché to Warsaw. This, at last, sounded like a real job. Peru and Poland had nothing in common except the letter P. An eagle now without a crown, Poland

had changed from Nazism to Communism, yet remained a country of high courage in spite of the devastation and oppression it had suffered. I was thrilled at the prospect of going there.

For two months I commuted between Virginia Water and London, during which time I was to be briefed for my new position. I was told that I must immediately discard my uniform, for the Service had reverted to the pre-war custom of preferring to see its officers wearing bowler hats and carrying neatly rolled umbrellas. But, out of uniform, I was quickly to remember how very little weight I carried in my dealings with a whole host of civil servants. As I made my way down Whitehall, I was conscious of the hundreds of permanent officials who, conscientious and unobtrusive as they were, were always there. For the first time for many years I remembered what a purgatory service at the 'Air House' could be, and how frankly impossible it was not to cross swords with one's Civil Service colleagues. Magnificent and self-effacing as is our Civil Service, one cannot but feel its very background, its permanency and immovability to be the complete antithesis to all for which the R.A.F. as a Service stands.

It occasioned me little surprise to find that my controller was representative of the very backbone of British officialdom. Silvery-haired, sixtyish, slow-moving, stout, with eyes hidden behind thick-lensed rimless spectacles, this benevolent gentleman from Brighton controlled the movements and destinies of all air attachés. Thoroughly efficient in the manner of all civil servants long seated at office desks, highly

skilled in dealing with others of his calling, I could not help wondering whether this paterfamilias was really the right man to ladle out the dose to Peru and Poland—the mixture as it was, is and would be for ever more.

Although my knowledge of the duties of an air attaché was somewhat vague, I did know that while in each embassy the Service attachés are both technical advisers to their ambassadors and representatives of their individual services, their methods and functions must differ considerably, say, in Moscow and Rio.

Nevertheless, whether I was destined for Washington or Warsaw, my benign guardian saw fit that I should be the guest of Rolls-Royce at their luxurious country house near Derby, take luncheon and liqueurs with Vickers, have tea and sandwiches with Percivals at Luton, and visit all the aircraft factories on his list. All this I had to do, no matter whether the Poles were likely to buy a Russian LI.2 or a Viscount. Yet every day, while I trotted about England in 1747, the cold blast from the steppes grew icier and a knowledge of the air forces of our Eastern friends became daily a matter of greater urgency. But it would appear more important that I should look at the dials giving the thrust development of the latest jet masterpiece than that I should use my precious time preparing for the obvious task that lay ahead.

Even using the most overt and correctly diplomatic methods, a properly trained observer can see and, more important, assimilate information which is meaningless to the uninitiated. Was my time well

spent, and was I sufficiently prepared for the pitfalls of serving in a hostile country officially at peace?

To make a case for any argument the strongest emphasis is permissible; at the same time exaggeration defeats its own purpose. Reflecting upon what I have written concerning my training as an air attaché, I wonder whether the fault was not possibly in my court. Should I perhaps have considered more carefully the objectives of my mission? It is too easy to blame the organisation and so exculpate oneself. I believe that it is fair to say that there were faults on both sides.

In the days that were already not so far ahead, I was to have time to think too much and to discover, the hardest way, that in my life I had so often thought too little.

However, even after such an admission of my own personal responsibility, I do not think that the initial training of an air attaché at that time could be described as other than haphazard. The official conscience was satisfied so long as the myopic eyes of my guardian behind their thick lenses were able to focus on a tick marking up a visit to Air Ministry (Intelligence), or the Joint Intelligence Bureau.

I have no doubt that during his attachment in London a budding air attaché meets all the right people. But I have even less doubt that the approach to the problem of fitting him for an appointment so entirely alien to his normal Service duties was never squarely faced.

It is neither easy to put one's finger on the precise trouble nor simple to suggest a remedy for it. But

when one considers what an expensive creature an air attaché is, with his special allowances, his staff, his motor-cars and his accommodation, one would have thought that the greatest possible care would have gone into his training so that he would pay the highest dividends.

Yet such is far from being so. It would hardly seem that a casual conversation between an illustrious Grade 1 civil servant and his opposite number in another ministry to arrange an interview for an embryo attaché is creative of a thoroughly planned briefing.

At the Foreign Office I spent half an hour with a Third Secretary, a member of the Polish Desk, who spoke to me in carefully modulated Oxfordese, but apart from asking me whether I knew my predecessor, I have no recollection of any résumé, however brief, of our policy in Poland and the part an R.A.F. officer was expected to play as a member of the Ambassador's staff. In fact, neither then nor later in Warsaw was I briefed by any diplomat on these not unessential points.

To end on a lighter note this account of the preparations for my debut into diplomacy, it was while walking round Wentworth during those days immediately prior to my departure, that I reflected, between strokes, upon the sum total of my qualifications for the job. My interest in sport was then, and indeed still is, an obsession amounting to near-religion. The feel of a half volley at rackets, a full-blooded drive at golf or a polo ball hit right on the meat, were for me physical and æsthetic pleasures

beyond comparison. Indeed, a very senior officer had once assessed my mental outlook as being 'no higher than that of a well-trained polo pony.' Even if that was perhaps a trifle unjust, it is true to say that for me the pleasures of this life have always reached their zenith in a feeling of physical fitness while in the pursuit of a ball of one size or another.

What, I wondered, would Poland have to offer in the way of sport? Golf was then my ruling passion, and although I had no intention of forsaking my beloved clubs or even the bag of practice balls, I already had little hope of finding even a nine-hole course, let alone a Gleneagles.

From enquiries I heard that scatter-gun shooting of partridge, wild duck and hares had been first-class in Poland in the pre-war days, so I decided that shooting must be the next of my sporting loves. Since for me no sport is worthwhile unless performed with a reasonable amount of skill, and because I believe that a few feathers out of a mallard's tail are even less rewarding than a sliced drive, I decided to brush up my skill with a gun. To this purpose I repaired to a shooting school near Northolt aerodrome, where I spent many happy afternoons banging away at elusive clay birds, from 'High towers' to the 'driven partridge.'

Without a 12-bore in my hands and a partridge whirring out of a stubble, this story might well never have been written. But I had yet to discover how heavy could be the fall of the enthusiast, the extra-physical type with an unbalanced obsession for outdoor sports.

CHAPTER TWO

I DROVE DOWN to Tower Bridge on a September evening as the red sun was setting behind Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. Alongside the dock a 2,500 ton single-funnelled ship was moored, her shape already losing distinction in the fading light. That was my first sight of the S.S. Baltavia, pride of the United Baltic Corporation. She was then, and is still, on a twice monthly run from the London Docks to the Polish port of Gdynia, via the Kiel Canal. Her main business was to carry cargo between the two countries—a classic example of the triumph of trade over the beatings of political drums and the blarings of the propaganda machine. No cold war could prevent Great Britain needing food and Poland machinery and raw materials, and so the

Baltavia brought eggs, poultry and tinned hams to this country and took back machinery, wool and other materials to build up the Communist economy.

Over and above her cargo space, she had accommodation for twelve passengers ; well fitted up cabins with comfortable beds and a bathroom shared with one's neighbour. She was indeed a ship, very much like any other of her sort, but by chance or choice she will always represent for me a journey into the unknown ; into the land of never-never.

Whether or not these future events were visible in my horoscope or whether I might have avoided the pitfalls ahead by a consultation with some Madame Arcarti on Brighton Pier, I will never know, for my mind was then occupied by more immediate problems. I have already confessed to being the worst type of physical extrovert, to which confession I must admit to another although perhaps less heinous offence, namely of an immoderate affection for bull terriers. This breed, aptly described as the gladiators of the canine race, have for me the most endearing characteristics. Forty to fifty pounds of compressed steel, they fear nothing. Their porcine expression conceals a subtle craftiness of mind, and they possess an affection and loyalty to their owner, a devotion which nothing seems able to destroy. How much simpler the problems of life would be if we, the over-civilised members of the human race, were able to assimilate one-tenth of this simplicity of outlook !

My two bullies in 1747 were Sharkie and Brenda. He a bombshell of nearly 60 pounds and she a temperamental young lady of almost championship

shape and breeding. With both of them straining on their leads and actively interested in the scene of loading, my immediate preoccupation was to see the pair of them safely housed.

A sailor working by the gaping void of the hold told me there were a couple of kennels aft. One glance at these was enough to show me that Sharkie at any rate would bite his way out in no time. No bull terrier accepts confinement as anything other than a personal injustice. However, there was no alternative, so leaving two pairs of almond eyes looking at me reproachfully, I moved off, not without a sense of guilt, to look round the ship and find my cabin. A glance into the latter showed that everything was in order.

That evening, I found myself placed at table between the Captain and the First Officer, a red-headed Scot. Like so many of his service, the Captain, who it was rumoured was over seventy, was a silent, almost taciturn individual, but imperturbable and as solid as the oak of the sailing ships of Drake. During the war he had been a Commodore of Convoys, and I could well picture him on the bridge ordering a straggler to keep station, unruffled by the Stuka dive bombers or even his ship being torpedoed beneath him. I had seen at close quarters such men of the Merchant Navy during my two years in Malta, and had been privileged then to meet skippers and crews of many ships from Blue Star to large tankers, and cannot miss this opportunity to pay the highest tribute to their magnificent courage often too little considered in comparison with the fighting Services.

To think that it was not until the second half of 1743 that they were entitled to receive an award for valour, such as a D.S.O. or D.S.C.!

The voyage from London to Gdynia takes about four days—two days to the entrance of the Kiel Canal and the remainder through the Baltic, where traffic still had to keep faithfully to the channel swept free from mines. Although the sea has an appeal for me and I have lived by it and flown over it for many hours, three or four days aboard a ship as a passenger is for me enough. After that, I feel overfed and under-exercised.

Of my fellow passengers, two only now stand out in my memory—a Polish couple returning after the war years to their own country. She, dark, vivacious and a star of the musical comedy stage, and he tall and slightly reminiscent of Maurice Chevalier. Like all Poles, they were patriotic to a degree and nostalgic in their longing to see their own country again, but at the same time apprehensive as to the changes that had taken place in their beloved Warszawa.

The dogs, as so often in the past, provided a spice of variety to the dullness of the voyage. One night after I had just fallen asleep, I was awakened by a rap on my cabin door and a voice announcing that 'one of the white dogs' was loose on deck. Hastily putting on a coat and slippers, I went off to the kennels. A fair sea was running, the wind whistled through the rigging and, apart from the ship's lights, the scene was pitch dark. I was just able to make out the splintered bars of one of the kennels. Brenda

pressed a damp nose against my hand. So, I thought, it was Sharkie, as I had guessed, who had taken the law into his own jaws. Feeling somewhat worried as to his whereabouts, for the ship was rolling heavily, I made a hurried search of the surrounding deck. A shape dimly visible against the rails turned out to be Sharkie, damp, dishevelled, but with a smugly self-satisfied look in his piggy little eyes. He gave me a doubtful wag of his tail for he knew that he had won and that the rest of the night would be spent on my bed.

Next morning at breakfast the Captain looked serious. A cat—luckily not *the* cat—had met an untimely end in the night. Although only a stowaway, the port watch had adopted it, and so, the Captain said, I had better keep clear of them until their feelings had cooled off. Those small eyes must have gleamed with even more satisfaction than I had noticed!

This little incident was the subject of an amusing article written by Nicholas Carroll, the Kemsley Press correspondent in Warsaw. From acorns oak trees grow—from a small paragraph in an English Sunday paper to a full page in the *Trybuna Ludu*, Warsaw's leading daily. But, thank God, I did not know!

On the afternoon of the fourth day we turned the corner of the Hel peninsula and Gdynia lay an hour's steaming ahead.

Before the war the Polish seaboard had consisted of a mere 50-60 kilometres—a corridor running between the two parts of Prussia, and until docking



facilities were constructed in 1724-75 at Gdynia, the Poles possessed no port of their own, all traffic having to pass through the free port of Danzig. The revision of the frontiers in 1745 at the Potsdam Conference had increased the Polish coast to some 400 kilometres and added two major ports, Stettin—now Szczecin—and Danzig—now Gdansk. Both these had suffered considerable damage, so Gdynia was still handling the major volume of traffic, as this port had survived virtually unharmed.

As the Baltavia slowly nosed her way alongside, bells ringing on her bridge, ropes thrown to secure to massive bollards, my mind flashed back to visions of so many similar scenes in my life ; Bombay, Karachi, Aden, Malta ; ships' rails massed with passengers, wives rejoining husbands, business men and soldiers returning from leave, excited, curious, blasé, the whole scene charged with emotion. Gdynia at first glance looked very much the same as any other port. On the quayside, I saw the familiar fore and aft cap and R.A.F. battledress of my predecessor. He looked rather sour and glum, I thought, and I afterwards discovered that he had expected me earlier but had been told that I was waiting an entry permit for my dogs. The lying jade of rumour, too often to provoke an incident, failed on this occasion.

We spent the evening in the Grand Hotel at Sopot, which before the war had been a fashionable resort and had boasted a casino. The hotel was large and its furnishings up to the standard of any good second-class hotel in England. The summer season was still in full swing, and in the packed restaurant

a six-piece orchestra was playing American jazz music, for in 1747 Marxist economy existed in theory more than in practice.

The gay throng jiggling to the music on the dance floor and, sitting shoulder to shoulder at the surrounding tables, no doubt contained a mixture of higher Government officials, business men and black marketeers. The suits of the men were of shoddy material and none of them wore ties. The women looked dowdy and I saw no nylons, but the atmosphere was gay and convivial. My first wonder was whether this scene was genuine or merely a façade. Perhaps it was the old story of 'eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.' I somehow felt that was the undercurrent. But I had no means of telling. I had just left an England of ration books, no red meat, a wafer of butter and a small lump of sugar per cup. But here in this hotel in a country literally laid waste by war, there appeared to be a superabundance of everything. Hors d'œuvres of every kind from smoked eels to eggs in aspic, meat cooked in butter, a cuisine richer than the French, gateaux filled with cream. Indeed, I wondered whether this was *liberté, égalité, fraternité* as I sat and guzzled. We washed down our rich dinner with vodka, distilled from potatoes (44% proof)—either *Czysta*, the clear kind, or flavoured *Wisnowka*, and *Starowin*, served in liqueur glasses and as a matter of custom and etiquette swallowed at a gulp. A sensation rather than a taste, it seems to suit the country and the cooking. Potent as it is, it is trebly so on an empty stomach and woebetide the hardest drinker who fails

to eat a little something between each gulp of this firewater !

So it was with feelings of repletion, both alcoholic and gastronomic, that I boarded the night train for Warsaw, glad of the comfort of my sleeper.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SUN was just appearing over the horizon as the train steamed slowly into Warsaw—the end of my journey and the beginning of the fateful events that lay ahead.

For some time I had watched the Polish landscape unfold itself in the grey dawn. I had been struck by the flat, featureless countryside, a vast plain that seemed to stretch endlessly across Europe all the way from Berlin to Moscow. Even on that warm September morning I had a feeling that I had come to a hard and ruthless country such as I had never experienced in my travels before. Yet it appeared to me at first sight a land well suited to the people who

inhabited it and who had acquired those self-same characteristics over the centuries in their continuous struggle for survival under the heels of foreign invaders.

I climbed down from the train and out into the morning sunshine. I had seen Berlin, the Ruhr, and had experienced the bombing of Malta at its height. But nothing that I had ever before witnessed could compare with the complete devastation that now surrounded me. It was horrifying in its finality. Bombed by the Luftwaffe in 1739, blasted during the uprising of 1744, the great city was cold-bloodedly and brutally destroyed, street by street and house by house, by the Germans as an act of vengeance. Surpassing everything in this holocaust of destruction, was the Ghetto. A square mile or so in extent and surrounded by a high wall so that it was a city within a city, it had been inhabited exclusively by Jews. Into it the Germans had herded Jews from all over Poland and there starved them slowly to death.

As a final act of bestiality the Nazis had packed these starving wretches—men, women and children—into cattle trucks to be exterminated in the steam chambers at Trzeblinka Camp. In desperation the Jews had risen to fight their torturers. Now all that remained of this area, mercilessly shelled and bombed by the Germans, were acres upon acres of pulverised brick. No H-Bomb could have created greater havoc.

As I stood staring at the utter ruin, I felt physically sick. Was this, I wondered, the work of civilised men or a group of fanatical monsters? Never in its long and tragic history had this country suffered such

horror as it did at the hands of Hitler and his fellow cut-throats.

Gradually, as my eyes became accustomed to the gaping holes, the jagged masonry and twisted steel, I realised with something of a shock that I was not looking at a deserted city but a metropolis throbbing with life and movement. Astonishingly, among the ruins, single-decker trams clanged and clattered, gleaming black saloon cars, with privileged government officials lolling in their upholstered seats, swept by, battered taxis of uncertain vintage hooted past, and droskies drawn by aged horses ambled on their way.

Even if the inhabitants of this city were shabby and drab, they hurried and jostled one another on the crowded pavements on their way to work with a purposefulness that proved they were a part of a city which was very much alive and where commerce still flourished.

Miraculously, too, in the warm sunshine of the September morning that so callously laid bare the ruins, flowers grew in profusion—gladioli, fuchsias and geraniums.

As I looked on Warsaw for the first time, I recalled what little I then knew of her chequered history during the past thirty years. Fought over during the first world war, Poland was re-established as a sovereign state in 1919. Two years later, at the very gates of her capital, she had defied the Red Army and had enjoyed a brief period of peace. But scarcely had she had time to repair the ravages of war than she was faced with the awful choice of allying herself

with either one or the other of her bullying neighbours. She had to decide whether to accept the overtures of Germany or throw in her lot with Russia—a country that for centuries she had good reason to distrust and fear. But at that time—between the world wars—the Poles felt secure in their belief that her immediate neighbours were sworn enemies and under no circumstances could they imagine a German-Russian rapprochement. They were, too, buoyed up in their determination to resist any threats, either German or Russian, by the Franco-British guarantee of their frontiers.

In 1739, when Hitler attacked Poland, he did so secured by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Poland, only partially mobilised on the advice of Britain and France, was no match for Germany's mechanised army and vast air supremacy. In a matter of weeks the war was over, but not before Russia herself marched into the Baltic countries and occupied Poland to the west of the Curzon Line. From then on, Poland was to experience the most savage occupation of her history, for Hitler and his minions lived up to the Bismarckian dictum—'but the Poles. They must be exterminated. . . .'

What happened during that occupation is now history to which the concentration camps at Oswiecim, Majdonek and Trzeblinka and the ruins of Warsaw stand witness.

But while remembering the terrible savagery of the Huns, the conduct of the Russians towards the Poles should not be forgotten. It was the Russians who deported tens of thousands from the eastern

provinces of Poland who never returned. It was at the hands of the Russians that thousands of the cream of young Polish manhood were massacred at Katyn. No words can describe the horrors of butchery, murder and rape that took place. Yet, terrible though they were, they failed to extinguish the spirit to resist and the Polish Underground Army fought on. This spirit was epitomised in the Warsaw uprising. But history may well consider this gallant epic as merely the sacrifice of a city on the altar of political wishful-thinking; glorious but in vain.

But what of the fate of Poland now that the war was over? In the weeks to come, I asked myself that question a thousand times. No political decisions had been taken at Yalta. In spite of the bumbblings of statesmen, the fact remained that, aided by the so-called strategy of the American military chiefs, the Russians were in occupation of Europe as far as Berlin and had an army of some 150,000 in Poland itself.

Churchill, alone amongst the great leaders, had the prescience to foresee that the new frontiers of Poland were of less importance than her political integrity. Indeed, few people at that time appreciated the power of the Communist machine to seize the reins of government. Although the members of the Polish Government in exile had few illusions as to Russian intentions, no action taken on their part could have affected the final result. The provisional government was largely composed of members of the Russian-sponsored and Communist Lublin committee, who held all the key ministries, including Public Security

and Regional Territories, as well as the control of the distribution of U.N.R.R.A. supplies. Thus all the ingredients of Communist infiltration were already present.

In January, 1747, were held the 'free and unfettered elections,' agreed to by the Great Powers at Yalta. Yet it is not too much to say that these were, in fact, the most flagrantly unfree, terror-inspired and fraudulent elections ever held. They were prefaced by the repression of all anti-Communist propaganda and mass arrests and intimidation. When they were over, the returns were falsified and other methods employed to ensure finally the end of democracy in Poland.

Such was the setting of the political scene in Poland at the time of my arrival in 1747.

During the next two years I was to watch the gradual but relentless turning of the Communist screw ; irrefutable proof that the modern technology of terror can control the oppression of the helpless masses.

As the result of the recent elections, the only opposing factor, the Peasant Party, was expelled from the Cabinet, and Mikolajczyk, their leader, forced to flee the country.

The refusal of Poland to take advantage of the Marshall Plan, no doubt on the instructions of Moscow, had successfully geared her economy to that of Russia. The pattern of Poland was cut to the Moscow plan. Workers who failed to reach the expected norm or target set by the Three- or Five-Year Plans, were on trial for sabotage. Already the

big estates had been broken up, and no farm was allowed to exist of more than 125 acres. Temporarily, at any rate, the land had been, in theory, handed over to the peasants, prior to the organisation of State and Collective Farms throughout the country. But the Polish peasant is a notoriously tough and tenacious character and his resistance to handing over his most priceless possession—the soil—had slowed up the process to a great extent. However tightly the screw had been turned and even when it was backed by the dreaded U.B. (security police) there still existed in Poland a traditional hatred of all things Russian and a pronounced Western outlook. As a result of many years of foreign occupation, an overwhelming proportion of the population paid little more than lip-service to the new régime.

But perhaps the chief co-ordinating factor in this resistance to the spread of Communism was the Catholic Church. The sworn enemy of a doctrine preaching materialism, the Church numbered 99 per cent. of the population of Poland amongst its believers.

I was present at the funeral of Cardinal Hlond, Primate of all Poland, which was attended by thousands of devout Poles; rumour had it that he died of a neglected appendix. I saw, too, on countless occasions the packed churches where the religious fervour of the congregations amounted to near-fanaticism.

Small wonder that the government, fully conscious of the power of the opposition, moved warily but purposefully, closing church schools, confiscating

funds and arresting bishops and parish priests on charges varying from collaboration with the Nazis to espionage. After these and other steps had been taken, the Church signed an agreement confirming its loyalty to the régime and confining its influence to matters spiritual. Certain priests, either suborned or victimised, became in theory, at any rate, willing parties to the Government. Since the latter had complete control of the radio and Press, it may well be that the power of the Church over succeeding generations will grow less. It is possible even that the Catholic Church may become, as is the Orthodox Church of Russia, a mere outward symbol of religion. But time alone will tell.

CHAPTER FOUR

I HAVE WRITTEN this brief résumé of the main political events in recent Polish history as I am certain that they, if only subconsciously, had a powerful effect on me, and, indeed, caused to a great extent the main events on which this story is based. Without such a knowledge of the background, the English reader, with centuries of political freedom and with no foreign invasion since the Norman conquest, would find it almost impossible to visualise a country such as Poland that possesses none of those privileges that we take for granted.

However, returning to my story and my arrival in Warsaw, I was met at the station by the Assistant

Air Attaché, a dark young Squadron-Leader from Glasgow who had been a photographic reconnaissance Spitfire pilot with a fine war record behind him. He had known Warsaw when only the main streets were free from rubble and when the only hotel—the Polonia—had housed all the foreign missions. He showed the superiority of an old hand and that slight air of condescension towards myself as a mere newcomer who had arrived after the worst was over.

Hungry after my all-night journey, I was delighted to be taken to one of the many coffee-houses in the Mokotowska Street, where once again I experienced the fleshpots of Poland after the near famine of a post-war England. I was soon to learn that the Poles value gastronomy almost as highly as the French and that their culinary skill runs the latter's pretty closely.

At the time of my arrival the restaurants were still privately owned, many by members of the old aristocracy, and smoked salmon, carp in aspic and spring chickens were delicacies that I was to enjoy during the next two years. Gradually, however, the tentacles of State control reached even into the pleasure of eating, and Category I, II and III restaurants appeared in which, while the food remained good, the service and the personal touch soon vanished.

After a splendid breakfast, we drove over the pavé streets through vistas of gaunt ruins, to the house that was to be my home for the next two years. Situated some 20 kilometres due south of Warsaw, in the hamlet of Zalesie, it proved to be a delightful villa built in the midst of a pine wood. Surrounded by a ten-foot wire fence—a common practice in a

country where thieves were apt to break in—and with a strong steel door, the house possessed one of the most attractive rooms it has ever been my pleasure to inhabit. Divided by sliding glass doors from the dining-room, oak-floored, studio-like, its ceiling reached to the roof. Great high double windows gave on to the garden. The whole room was heated by a Devon-type fireplace and a huge blue china tiled stove which reached nearly to the balcony looking down from the first floor. I felt a sense of pleasure every time I entered this lovely room. With the glass doors folded back, the rugs rolled up and the radio-gram playing, it was the perfect setting for a party, and twenty or thirty couples could dance comfortably on its parquet floor. After the tin-roofed huts at Turnberry and Pershore, my new home was a veritable palace.

The following morning I reported at the British Embassy to make my initial contact with the Diplomatic Service. The building was an imposing three-storied edifice that had been the town house of a *ci-devant* nobleman, whose widow had gladly rented it to the British and so earned what was probably her only remaining source of income.

The Embassy stood off what had been the Aleje Ujazdowskie, now renamed Aleja Stalina. Apart from the Ambassador and his staff, there were the administrative personnel, clerks, shorthand typists, code and cypher girls, guards, and naval, military and air force other ranks, numbering some seventy to eighty British in all. Also employed were Polish chauffeurs, messengers, interpreters and clerks in the commercial

and consular sections. Amongst the latter was one Mrs. Marynowska, who had been arrested and was awaiting her trial in the dreaded Mokotow prison. Another, a former member of the famous Wedel chocolate family, was arrested shortly after my arrival and eventually tried on a specious charge of collaboration with the Nazis ; and a third, a woman who escaped just in time, together with her son, the secret police literally at her heels. Others were no doubt victimised and questioned and compelled, willingly or otherwise, to supply any information they had on the ways and habits of the Embassy. For these very good reasons it became the policy to employ only British subjects, except in purely menial positions.

Concerning the other denizens of what was to me a new world, I must, considering the embarrassment I was later to cause them, be doubly careful in my comments.

Cavendish-Bentinck, the previous Ambassador, had been declared *persona non grata* by the Polish Government. A brilliant, dynamic personality, from all accounts, he had perhaps overstepped the mark by a too personal contact with the Polish opposition. Soon afterwards the Foreign Office was to dismiss him for some matrimonial affair and thus lose the services of an exceptional brain.

His successor, the then Ambassador, was, I am sure, typical of the best of his service ; cold and critical in appraisal, as Consul in Munich before the war he had been no ostrich in the sand—no Neville Henderson. However, he struck me as being without

fire. For him Poland had already become a lost cause to the West.

Of the others, two only stand out in my mind, mainly, I think, because they met and talked with the Poles. One, a relic of pre-war days, spoke fluent Polish with a vile accent, and knew the political background from A to Z. In the large salon of his Warsaw house one met professors and students, the old régime, journalists, actors and artists, and individuals from all walks of life, without any trace of officialdom. The second, a fellow with a leonine head of hair, competed with the first in the number of Poles he entertained on any one occasion.

As an officer for a score of years or so in a fighting Service, I was bound to look with interest on the operation of a department of State that was the very antithesis of my own. To me, with the Embassy in Warsaw as my yardstick of comparison, there seemed to be lacking the spirit of teamwork. No doubt each member felt in varying degrees loyalty to his profession, but individually rather than as a servant of a composite body. Moreover, the practice by which a senior reported adversely on his junior by semi-official correspondence, without the knowledge of the latter, was entirely contrary to Service custom as I understood it, and seemed to me not conducive to the essential feelings of co-operation and fellowship.

The weapon of the diplomat is the pen rather than the sword. On his skill in appreciating the political scene and its translation into words may rest most vital decisions. In short, the despatch is the hallmark

of the diplomat ; the standard by which he is judged. Reading as I did many of these despatches, I could not help but admire the clarity and lucidity of their prose. But, Service-minded, I often speculated as to the authenticity of the source, for with the exception of the two individuals I have mentioned, contact between the Embassy staff and the Poles was slight, and as time went by and the cold war became hotter it grew daily less.

Well do I remember the story from Moscow that an official of our Embassy there had actually spoken to a Russian waiter and the despatch he wrote, and the official view that the successor to Stalin was based on the number of pictures and busts of a Politburo member shown in a local shop. I often wondered how far the keen student of the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin line suited the facts to fit his theories. Although the trained mind can learn from the newspapers, radio and the speeches of public figures, the Communist machine is able to control the movements of foreign diplomats and their contacts with the people to an extent impossible in any democratic country.

Comparatively recently Foreign Office expenditure came under severe criticism. From what I personally saw in Warsaw there can be no question that from the senior member of the embassy to the most junior guard, their standards of living were incomparably higher than they would have expected or experienced at home. The prestige value of British diplomatic representatives in a foreign country living in a proper style must not, of course, be overlooked. Nevertheless, when one considers that, in countries behind the Iron

Curtain, entertainment consists almost entirely of cocktail parties, lunches and dinners for other members of the *Corps Diplomatique* and not for nationals, the lavish scale of these entertainments seems scarcely worth the expense. A further factor is the completely unrealistic exchange rate between sterling and the local currencies. As a case in point, my personal allowances were in the region of £10-11 a day, while whisky and gin, being duty free, cost only six or seven shillings a bottle. Under such conditions, the lot of the diplomat abroad is a gilded pill indeed !

So far as my official duties during those two and a quarter years were concerned, there is little to be said. An air attaché, in a similar way to that of his naval and military colleagues, receives confirmation of his appointment from the Sovereign. Seconded temporarily as he is to the Foreign Office, and a member of the Ambassador's staff, he yet renders the majority of his reports to, and receives his instructions from, the Air Ministry. The more precise nature of his duties depends considerably on the country in which he is serving. In South America, for instance, it might well be that his function is to stimulate the sales of British aircraft and aero engines ; in Scandinavia, perhaps, to assist in the re-equipment and training of the national air force. But in Poland, as in Russia and the satellite countries, it is no secret to say that a knowledge of these countries' air forces and aircraft industries is a matter of primary concern. The official brief lays down that this knowledge must be acquired by overt means, and I will leave it at that.

My contacts with the Polish Air Force were prac-

tically non-existent. After six months of respectful requests, I was finally received by the Commander-in-Chief, General Romejko. A pilot in the Soviet Air Force during the war, he spoke Polish with a strong Russian accent. He received me at his headquarters. My request for the privilege of being shown over a P.A.F. station was met by the bland reply that at the moment all the squadrons were out under canvas. I suggested that I might visit them during the winter. The general, short, squat and hirsute, shrugged his shoulders. The Polish winters, he explained, were severe, so with snow on the ground, what would be the point of arranging such a visit? Polish officialdom, as I was to experience it, was so polite, but so, so negative!

The only point of interest in my visit to the general was the number of Russian uniforms I saw in the passages of his headquarters; proof, if proof was needed, of the control exerted by Poland's eastern neighbour.

That courtesy call represented my one and only official meeting with any member of the P.A.F. during my tour in the country. There were, however, no restrictions on travel, and I spent many an hour at the wheel of a Service Humber Snipe driving round the country. Flat as the proverbial pancake, the Polish terrain lends itself naturally to the construction of airfields, and many were the deserted aerodromes, built by the Germans during the war, that I drove over. Of all that I saw, perhaps the most unique was an airfield that consisted of 500 yards or so of pounded rubble veritably in the heart of the city of

Breslau—renamed Wroclaw—used by the Luftwaffe during the Russian advance in 1744.

Uniforms were rarely worn and then only at some official function such as the King's Birthday Parade. Of such occasions, I recall the New Year's Day when the Ambassador, escorted by his Service Attachés, attended a reception given by the President of the Polish Republic. Heads of the various foreign missions, saluted on arrival by a guard of honour, drove up to the Belvedere Palace and, to the playing of their national anthems, were received by the President, dressed formally in a morning coat. This Russian puppet passed down the line of waiting diplomats, with a handshake, an obsequious smile for his master, the Russian Ambassador, and a façade of geniality. Then it was over, except for the vodka and the caviare.

On New Year's Day, 1749, the Service attachés, before meeting the President, were received by the Vice-Minister of Defence, General Spychalski. Broad-shouldered, sphinx-like and sallow, he shook hands without a word. Rumour had it that he was the political head of the armed forces and a fully indoctrinated Communist.

In August, 1751, I heard his voice on the radio, a witness in an espionage trial and already incarcerated in Mokotow gaol, for it is but a short step from authority to prison for high-placed politicians behind the Iron Curtain.

Another memorable occasion was when, with the Councillor of our Embassy, I attended the funeral of Cardinal Hlond, Archbishop and Primate of all

Poland. The solemnity of the occasion, the impressive ritual round the catafalque of the dead priest, the intense fervour of the vast congregation, silent witnesses paying their final tribute to this valiant enemy of Communism, still remain vividly in my mind.

Then there were American Independence Day, July 14th, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, Red Army Day, and the national days of each country represented by the various foreign missions in Warsaw. Occasions for endless hand-shaking, heel-clicking and the raising of glasses that were utterly meaningless to me but full of significance to the practised diplomat studying the form. To the latter, the questions of whether the U.S.S.R. Ambassador spoke to his colleague from Yugoslavia, and of how many members of the Polish Politburo were present and how long they stayed, were of vital importance. The shrug of a shoulder, the raising of an eyebrow or the mere inflection of a voice, were jewels of intelligence to the gentlemen of the Corps Diplomatique!

Of the less formal but more social occasions there were many, for with duty-free drink and a notecase crammed with zloties by a generous government, entertainment cost but little. It was simply a case of shake the bottle and on with the dance—fun while it lasted. But, so far as I could see, it served little purpose other than encouraging an enlarged liver and yet another increase in the Foreign Office budget.

Two incidents still remain in my memory of such parties. Late one night I was driving home along the straight road from Warsaw to my house. Just ahead of me and visible in the lights of my car was our

second Humber Snipe, driven by a colleague, a brilliant but unpredictable young man. Suddenly, to my amazement, I saw his car leave the road and pursue a straight but bumpy course along the lines of a small-gauge railway that ran parallel with the main road. Finally, the car stopped, but not before it had bounced its way over some hundred yards or so of railway track. Getting out, I found my friend half-asleep at the wheel and quite unconscious of what had occurred. Trains luckily were few and far between, and with the help of some local peasants the car was manhandled back to mobility.

My second memory is of a New Year's Eve party in 1948 at the Polonia Hotel. It is a tradition that the New Year should be heralded in with a mazurka, danced at an ever-increasing speed. At the time, I was on the floor with my partner, a dancer of supreme skill, who seemed able to follow my erratic course with ease and grace. We had drunk enough vodka but not too much. Faster and faster we whirled, scarcely conscious of anything but the ever-growing tempo of the music.

Then, to my utter astonishment, I saw we were alone on the vast floor, surrounded by some three or four hundred cheering and clapping Poles.

I am certain it was not our skill as dancers that they were applauding but the sight of a stiff-necked Englishman and a member of the Embassy staff letting his hair down !

CHAPTER FIVE

I HAVE LEFT to the end of my account of these two years the part which the Polish people played in my story; a part which was later to have so much significance.

Before the war I had passed my Higher Standard in Urdu when serving on the N.W. Frontier of India. But this and a schoolboy remembrance of French seemed hardly an adequate qualification for my post in Warsaw. To live in a country and to be unable to meet and talk to its inhabitants struck me, as before in the East, as entirely futile. Many members of the Diplomatic Corps seemed quite content to mix only with other members of their own and other foreign missions. But, however congenial and pleasant a

Frenchman, a Dutchman or a Persian might be, I felt personally that I had come to Poland to meet Poles, as well as to see and know their country.

I found myself wondering whether these trained diplomats were wiser than I was in avoiding personal contacts and, by so doing, avoiding the dangers of compromising the Poles themselves. I often pondered on this in the days to come, and shuddered to think of the unwitting harm I may have caused to so many.

However, I am writing now of 1747 when such gloomy thoughts were still in the future and when I was only concerned with the thrill of this new country and meeting its people.

My Polish teacher was a small, blue-eyed, blonde girl, who looked even younger than her twenty-five years. We met twice a week either in the Embassy or in her mother's apartment, where she piloted me through the intricate channels of Polish pronunciation and grammar. Under her tuition I learnt that **SZCZ** was pronounced as the middle consonants of Ashchurch, and after some six months, by the time I left for my first short spell of leave to England, I felt that I was no longer a deaf mute in front of either my servants or local friends.

On my return, I was shattered to hear that my instructress had been arrested. What secrets, I wondered, were hidden behind that young and innocently frank face? But I was not to know that I was next to see her behind prison bars or even to guess that I would be asked to confirm that a copy of Kravchenko's 'I Choose Freedom,' found in her flat, had

been lent to her by me. I confess that no red warning light shone in my eyes, although perhaps the green was momentarily flecked with yellow.

I have already written of my childish obsession for games and outdoor sports of every kind. Because of this I was bitterly disappointed to find that the pre-war nine-hole golf course, constructed mainly for the foreign element, had naturally enough not been restored, so it was the attic for my clubs, while my 12-bore came out of its case.

Before the war the flat farming land of Poland had held many a partridge in its stubbles. Now, the shooting of partridges, decimated by the ravages of war, was restricted to a few weeks a year. Pheasants, reared and preserved by the great landowners, had become virtually extinct, but hares there were still in plenty. Due to the absence of hedges, these were shot in a manner which I had not previously experienced. Guns and beaters together formed a circle of a mile or so in diameter, and then slowly moved in towards its centre. Gradually, as the circle contracted, the hares could be seen dashing wildly in all directions, eventually breaking out between the guns and the beaters. The Polish temperament, like the Gallic, is not phlegmatic, and soon there was a turmoil of excitement; beaters shouting, guns banging, and pellets whistling past one's legs. I never saw anyone peppered, but often marvelled that this should be so! Wild boars, too, were shot with enthusiasm by the Poles.

These shoots that I attended took place in the magnificent pine forests of Silesia, either during the

glorious Polish autumn when the sky is still azure blue but there is already a whiff of frost in the air, or during the winter when the forests are fairylike in their mantle of sparkling white. Then the only sound was the crackle of the snow under one's boots. The boars were driven towards the guns and, if there were any about, bullets could be heard ricocheting in every direction.

Having enjoyed the fun of pig-sticking in India, I did not think much of boar shooting as a sport, though the splendour of the scenery and the glorious surroundings made up for a great deal. But, most of all, I enjoyed the duck shooting. This usually took place in the morning or evening when the birds were flying to or from their feeding grounds. In the morning, they could be heard whistling overhead before they became visible in the first grey light of the dawn. At dusk, as the shadows lengthened, the birds could be seen as dark silhouettes against the dying brilliance of the western sky.

As I write of such moments, memories crowd back to me — of late summers when the mosquitoes showered in my face; of winter when, with frozen fingers, I waited for the whirr of wings overhead and the sound of the first shot; of a morning, with the pale sun creeping over the eastern horizon, the ground still shrouded with mist, and the deep quack-quack of the mallard gaining height from his watery couch, and the whistle of teal, diving and twisting in flight formation overhead. I recall, too, a winter's night, the sky filled with snow, when the mallard circled in their search for an ice-free pool in the

fading light, followed by the flash of a 12-bore and the thud of the falling bird on the iron-frozen ground.

But what of the people I met and with some of whom I shared these wonderful days' shooting? Prince Janousz Radziwill, possessor of a name famous in Europe and throughout history, owner before the war of a 60,000-acre estate near Warsaw, a palace in the city and a shooting lodge in the east—now living in one room of a house not far from mine. Patrician in appearance, manner and outlook, he still walked abroad immaculate in his grey trilby, well-cut dark suit and rolled silk umbrella from Brigg. I never heard a word of complaint from him. Well do I remember an evening when, sitting round the polished mahogany table in my dining-room, the silver glistening in the candlelight, he solemnly mixed some burgundy with his champagne. 'Red blood we used to call it,' he told me, as he raised his glass and, I am sure, drank a silent toast to the old Poland.

But gone now were the days of the large country houses, the almost feudal splendour; and yet the hospitality of the Poles remained.

I shall never forget the first meal I had in a Polish household. We had been out shooting all day and had walked for miles tramping over the heavy black soil of the stubble fields. Since we had only had a snack for luncheon I was terribly hungry. After being introduced to the ladies, my hostess led us into the dining-room where my eyes lit up when I saw the table loaded with delicacies: slices of cold ham, sausages of various kinds, smoked eels and soused herrings. My host, whose duty it was to give the lead for us

to empty our glasses of vodka, was no laggard. The Polish character is naturally gay and exuberant; add to it the spirit of vodka, and conversation and laughter overflow like bubbles from a newly opened bottle of champagne. In such a setting, any inhibitions about the language soon vanished and I found myself engaged in animated conversation with my charming hostess. Toasts followed one another in quick succession, and a sense of repletion was stealing over me when I saw her give a sign to the other women round the table. As they rose to clear away, I leant back in my chair reflecting on the excellence of the meal. Then, to my amazement, I saw the ladies returning carrying plates and dishes. Soup, two meat courses, and a large slice of some rich cake followed. Polish hospitality knows no refusal, so it was with a stomach stretched beyond any normal limits that I finally took my leave, feeling at least a couple of stone heavier than when I arrived.

Many an expedition I made by car out into the country, for, indeed, there seemed few parts of Poland that were not happy hunting grounds for duck. Three or four Poles and I would set out by Humber Snipe or 4 x 4, a square box-like vehicle with a four-wheel drive, eminently suitable for ploughing its way through bog and stream. Morning and evening we used to wait for the duck to flight. Well off the beaten track and with no habitation in sight, the gaunt flat countryside, greying in the waning light, had an unbelievable fascination for me. We spent the nights in the house of a friend, the local inn or, best of all, some peasant's cottage. The Polish

peasants, still probably the largest sector of the community, are a race apart. Short, strongly built, roughly shaven, they are veritable sons of the soil whom a Communist régime has so far failed to shift from their treasured land. In their villages, the houses are little more than wooden shacks, with no sanitation and without electricity. Devoutly Catholic, the walls of their sparsely furnished homes are never without a picture of the Virgin and Child. I have slept in beds with heavy feather mattresses or, often, when these were short, our peasant host brought in straw that, when thickly spread on the floor, provided a better night's sleep than the bug-ridden four-poster.

Breaking down on the road one night, a party of five of us knocked on the door of a small cottage. Without hesitation, we were invited in and the owners immediately vacated their only bedroom for us to use. Luckily, I had a bottle of whisky with me and I shall always remember the short, stocky figure of our host rocking slightly on his bandy legs as he knocked back straight whiskies like gulps of water, delivering meanwhile a long lucid monologue on the Polish political situation. I felt at that moment that no foreign invader nor Communist repression could break the spirit of such people.

With one vital exception, I feel it better that I should not mention any more of my countless Polish friends and acquaintances. So far as they are concerned, harm enough has been done. No words of mine can pay adequate tribute to their qualities of courage and fortitude, their gaiety and vivacity, in a

country still reeling from the effects of war. When I came to realise more clearly that their own Government looked on my activities with such disfavour, I often wondered how they were prepared to accept me as a friend and companion. These very qualities of character, coupled with a liking of all things Western, hatred of Russia and Communism, and a toughness of spirit, born not only from the years of savage Nazi occupation but from a century or more under a foreign oppressor, were the very traits that influenced them to meet me and so risk the malevolence of their secret police.

A couple of months before I was due to terminate my appointment and leave the country, I was rung up by a keen Polish sportsman who asked whether I would care to spend a Sunday partridge shooting. I accepted and we arranged to meet. Just before he rang off, he mentioned casually that he knew two girls who might like to join us. Should he ask them? Thinking of our day's sport, I replied somewhat grudgingly: 'If they can walk.' A decision so fateful in its consequences had been made, the wheels of destiny had begun to turn.

Sunday, October 9th, 1749, broke fine and clear—a typical Polish autumn day. Picking up my friend, we crossed the Vistula by the Poniatowski bridge and drove to Praga, a large suburb on the eastern side of the river. Joe had arranged that we should meet the girls on the next corner. I stopped the car. The appointed time came and went. Punctuality is not a virtue of the Polish people, but time was passing and I was itching to be off.

'Let's go,' I said. 'We can meet them some other time.'

As I pressed the starter, Joe called out: 'Here's one of them.'

Walking towards the car was a tall fair girl, simply dressed in a grey three-quarter-length coat and a tartan tweed skirt. Her hair shone in the sunlight and I was struck at once by the warmth and vivacity of her frank smile as she returned Joe's greeting. As she climbed into the car beside me, she introduced herself as Barbara Bobrowska. 'You are Henry Turner and you are English?' she asked.

I nodded as I let in the clutch. 'I am at the British Embassy, Air Attaché. Been here two years.' I spoke slowly, for although I had a working knowledge of Polish, I was by no means fluent.

'I like the English,' Barbara told me. 'I spent a year in the British Zone of Germany—in a D.P. camp where I had been taken from Belsen.'

'Belsen?'

'Yes. I was sent there from Auschwitz. See!' She pulled up her coat sleeve and, glancing down, I saw the prison number 32115 tattooed on her white arm.

'That is the Nazi trade mark,' she said simply. 'I will carry it all my life.'

As the car hummed over the flat Polish countryside, Barbara told me her story. She was twenty-seven and the only child of Polish parents. Thirteen years before, at the outbreak of the war, she had experienced the Nazi occupation of Warsaw. One night, picked up away from her house without identity papers during a house-to-house search by the S.S.,

she had found herself in Auschwitz concentration camp. It was known as the 'Camp of Death,' for more than three million men and women of all nationalities, but mostly of Jewish origin, were liquidated in its gas chambers, murdered by injections, shootings and mass hangings. Never were the words of Dante's *Inferno* more apt—'Abandon hope all ye who enter here.'

Barbara told me that she had spent three winters in this hell on earth. When I heard later from her own lips the full story of those ghastly days, I marvelled at the mental and physical resistance of the human mind and body. No trace showed on her lovely face of this terrible ordeal. No shadow of that awful past dimmed the gaiety of her laughter.

I remember that I got a right and left as a covey winged up from the stubble, but that October day my mind was not on shooting and Joe quizzed me with a knowing smile. Later that night, he stood propped against the Polonia bar while we danced, Barbara still in her country tweeds and I in my corduroy breeches, leggings and heavy shooting boots.

For those next all-too-short seven weeks never a day passed that I did not see her. Even if only for a few minutes snatched in some coffee-shop or small restaurant, we managed to be together. Every weekend we drove off by car—sometimes alone, at others with Polish friends. Two memories linger in my mind of those wonderful days—glorious autumn days on the Mazurian lakes, in what had been East Prussia, in the nearby pine forests, where we saw the shattered

concrete remains' of the German Army Headquarters. Together, Barbara and I climbed the 'Bunker Hitlera,' from which the Reich Führer, as supreme commander, had witnessed the retreat of his armies before the advancing Russian hordes. Then there was that Sunday when, in a small yacht, we attended the end of the season meeting of the Warsaw Yacht Club. I remember that the winds were so contrary that the two of us had to jump ashore and tow our little craft from the bank. 'Hot Potato' Sunday it was called, when the owners and crews of a dozen or so craft came ashore to consume vodka and sandwiches. It was a simple ceremony of laughter and good fellowship.

Yet I was steeped in melancholy, for I realised as I watched the last leaves falling from the trees and saw the hint of snow in the sky, that my tour of duty was drawing to its close. Soon Barbara and I would have to part. Would it be a final good-bye or, as the Polish say, 'dowidzenia' (to seeing you)? We tried to avoid the answer, yet both of us knew in our hearts that no passport would ever be granted to her by the authorities.

One day I asked her whether she would be willing to escape. For some time she said nothing, the expression on her lovely face giving no indication of her thoughts. Then, with her usual candour, she said : 'Yes. I trust you and the arrangements you would make for my safety.'

Those last hectic weeks passed all too quickly in a whirl of farewell parties, in packing and crating my goods and chattels.

We spent our last week-end together at Lodz. Then the day came when I had to leave. In the evening, with my dogs and luggage piled into the Humber Snipe, I took a last look round the lofty studio-like room that I had grown to love. The scene of many a gay party, it stood bereft of its trimmings, gaunt and deserted, haunted by the ghosts of departed guests.

That night the countryside was covered by its first sprinkling of snow. It gleamed white in the headlights as Barbara and I drove to the station, silent with our thoughts.

The long train steamed slowly out on its all-night journey to Gdynia, and I watched Barbara's duffel-coated figure gradually grow smaller, one forlorn arm raised in farewell.

Turning into my sleeper, where the dogs were already comfortably installed, I saw in my mind the image of Barbara's face and her lovely smile half blotted out by tears. I heard that last pathetic cry: 'Henry, Henry, I shall wait for you always!'

Although I was desperately tired by the turmoil of the past weeks, so that I seemed scarcely capable of thinking coherently, I had a curious, almost fatalistic presentiment that this was not the end of our brief romance. . . .

I left Poland on December 1st, 1749, as I had arrived, by the S.S. Baltavia. Just before we cast off and left the quayside, I had a sudden urge to stand for the last time on Polish soil. So, making the dogs an excuse, I went ashore. As I stood on the quay for a few minutes, my mind was filled with memories of the forests and lakes, the flat, strangely unyielding

countryside that I had grown to love, and of the brave people encompassed in the deathly embrace of the Russian bear.

But as I retraced my steps up the gangway, it was the memory of that solitary figure on Warsaw station that wrenched at my heart.

CHAPTER SIX

I HAVE RETURNED to England many times from tours of duty abroad. The twinkling of myriads of lights as the aircraft circles before touching down at London Airport, the white cliffs of Dover, the Nab Tower and Southampton Water, the grey ghostly outline of Liverpool Docks ; first sights of all these have thrilled me after long sojourns in foreign parts.

Returning from Poland, however, I felt in some way different, for before I had, to use that overworked phrase, been serving in outposts of the Empire, where, however loosely, the U.K. had been the hub on which they revolved. In Poland no such link had existed. I had to some extent become absorbed in the life-blood of that country and part of me yet remained there.

Service in post-war England had lost its appeal for me, and so I resigned my commission. Having done so, I sat down and reviewed my future possibilities somewhat half-heartedly. Should I become something in the City or a farmer in Norfolk? I could not make up my mind.

The truth of it was that my promise and pact with Barbara had become for me a crusade; a near obsession. My affections and feelings for her remained, but now I seemed to be possessed with an overwhelming urge to release someone from the clutches of that benighted and frustrated country. For me, Barbara's rescue would be a symbol, a token to those friends of mine held fast in the Communist toils.

With the help and connivance of a girl friend in the British Information Centre in Warsaw, our lines of communication were safely established. My mind now turned to ways and means of escape. This did not present a problem easily solved, but one which became even more difficult when it concerned a woman. To the east lies Russia—further comment is superfluous. On the far side of the Oder-Neisse rivers, marking the western boundary, is the Eastern Zone of Germany; another puppet of Soviet Russia, heavily garrisoned with Red troops. The southern frontier lies in the Tatra mountains, virtually impassable in the winter, with Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia as Poland's neighbour. Finally, to the north, there is the Baltic Sea.

Since the war, many escapes had been successfully accomplished. A girl I knew and her mother were

driven together with a coachload of other refugees, all issued with false papers, across the frontier to Prague. By 1950, however, the scene had changed. The Communist coup had taken place in Czechoslovakia; frontier guards and boundaries had become more efficient and effective. So far as the Russian border was concerned, it was said to be wired throughout its entire length, and over it armed sentries in searchlight-equipped towers kept constant watch.

As an airman, I suppose it was logical that I should first consider the possibility of escape by aeroplane. Bob, a Mosquito pilot in the war with experience of flying over Central Europe in light aircraft, and I pored over maps. We decided that the most practical solution would be to fly to Vienna, refuel, and take-off again in the early hours of the morning. Crossing Czechoslovakia in the dark, our intention was to land as soon after first light as possible. The aerodrome I had selected was a grass landing-ground in the south-west corner of Poland, used by the Germans during the war and now deserted. As I had driven over it, I knew that its surface was in good shape.

After having picked up Barbara, it would have been a comparatively short flight to the United States Zone of Germany.

Bob, although he confessed to having the jitters and said that he woke up sweating after fearful nightmares, was, I am sure, ready to have a go. Alas, our plans of borrowing an aircraft fell through.

Next, remembering the faked identity papers of

wartime days, I wondered whether I could beg, borrow or steal a passport and alter it for Barbara to use. I rang up Mary, a friend of Warsaw days. I knew her as a type, dashing but sensible, who I was sure would help in any mad scheme if she thought it at all worthwhile. She agreed, as I knew she would, and promised to apply for a Czech visa.

Barbara meanwhile had sent me a passport photograph, and also found out that she could cross the Polish border at Teschen on a day pass, before temporarily acquiring British nationality. To change the photographs on the passport and re-stamp them seemed to present little difficulty. The Czech authorities were reluctant to give Mary a visa, and I feared for Barbara's lack of English. So, in the end, this plan was dropped.

Why not the Baltavia, I asked myself, wondering why I had not thought of her before? She had been my conveyance to and from Poland—why should she not now be Barbara's? I picked up the telephone and called the shipping offices. The Baltavia was due to dock the following day at noon.

Wasting no time, I was aboard almost before the ropes were secured and the gangway down. Champ-ing while port officials went aboard, passengers came ashore and the business of unloading cargo began, I waited impatiently at the ship's rail. One of the officers, Mac, a ginger-haired, freckle-faced Scot, was, I decided, the man to help me. Buttonholing him at last, I led the way to the lounge where we looked at each other over a pink gin. A few moments of casual conversation, then, feeling nervous as to his decision,

I broached the subject. A young and pretty Polish girl, victim of a concentration camp, longing for a free and unfettered life in the West, wanted to escape. Would he help?

'Anything to fix those bastards!' Mac answered, and I knew he was sincere.

He said that the next voyage was his last as he was going on leave and then transferring to another ship which was not on the Gdynia run.

'So,' he added with a grin, 'we must work fast.'

Mac did not consider that getting Barbara aboard unseen by the Polish guards presented much difficulty, and suggested I should leave all that for him to arrange on the spot. We agreed that Barbara should meet him on the day after the ship was due to dock, at a restaurant where there was a band and a dance floor. He was to wear a dark blue suit and a red tie. The code word for their mutual recognition was 'salami pulkownika'; a salami sausage of a colonel—a catch-phrase often used between Barbara and myself. No common language existed between them. Barbara spoke Polish and German, Mac only his mother tongue. I confess that I did not like the sound of this, but there was nothing we could do about it, so I hoped for the best.

Wishing him good luck, I went home to await results. Inaction has never suited me, but I had no alternative but to sit in suspense and try not to think of the consequences if the venture failed and the pair of them fell into the hands of the Polish security police, the dreaded U.B. Time crawled and the hours literally seemed to stand still. Surely the cable that

Mac had promised to send should arrive? Every time the bell rang in my flat, I rushed to the door. At last the cable arrived. Scarcely able to focus my eyes on the familiar buff envelope, I tore it open.

"Carpet seen but not bought, no damage done," I read.

My disappointment and frustration were mingled with relief that nothing worse had befallen Barbara. Success had been, perhaps, so near, but yet so very far away.

I met Mac immediately he came ashore a few days later and heard his story. They had recognised each other without difficulty and had danced together. But, as I had feared, their conversation had been a stumbling block. Mac had persuaded Barbara to go to the docks with him to the very side of the ship. But then she had taken fright, as well she might have done, not fully understanding the plan of action. Mac had been charmed by her and was deeply disappointed that the chance had been missed. The night had been dark and the sentry absent from his post.

'My last trip and all,' he said miserably.

In a note that he brought with him from Barbara, she wrote that she was thrilled she had been able to meet somebody sent by me and was bitterly upset that she had been unable to come back with him. She had carried out my instructions to the letter, but just as she was leaving her home in Warsaw with all her things packed, her mother had noticed the clothes missing from her wardrobe and had had a heart attack. How could she, an only daughter, leave her

mother, probably for ever, at such a moment? In a few weeks' time her mother would recover and then she would be ready and willing to try again.

Before Mac left the Baltavia, he had spoken to another officer, who had agreed to help. Though intelligent, the latter lacked Mac's fire and resolution, and I immediately felt doubtful of his genuine zest for the task.

Twice more the ship sailed, and twice more I experienced the torture of apprehension and hope frustrated. On each occasion Barbara made the all-night journey from Warsaw to Gdynia, but she and the officer failed to meet. My nerves frayed and on edge, I pondered over the next move. To give up and abandon the project was unthinkable. Blindly, I decided that I must go myself. If I thought at all, it was that delightful delusion of the confirmed and incurable optimist—it can't happen to me. And so the die was cast. My mind made up, I never looked askance at the wisdom of my decision.

The first step was to find a passage in the ship. With this end in view I went to the offices of the United Baltic Corporation.

'I am just recovering from an attack of jaundice,' I said, 'and my doctor has advised me to take a short sea trip. What about a passage to Poland and back?'

The clerk replied that he could arrange that for me, but added that it was only possible to take a single ticket to Gdynia.

'You will have to obtain your return ticket from our shipping offices there,' he explained. 'I suppose,' he asked casually, 'you have your visa because we do

not allow passengers to remain aboard the ship while she is in port.'

I felt suddenly annoyed. 'What an utterly Gilbertian situation!' I laughed. 'On the one hand you say that passages may be booked, and on the other you lay down impossible conditions.'

But the clerk remained adamant. No expostulations on my part could budge him. Those, he said, were his company's regulations.

Baffled and exasperated, I demanded to see the managing director, only to be told that he was engaged and that, in any case, the rules were the same for everyone.

This was indeed a fall at the first fence, I thought angrily. I was just about to leave when my enemy, the confounded clerk, mentioned inconsequentially that the company's representative in Gdynia happened to be in the office.

I knew the latter to be Colonel H—, our Vice-Consul at that port, and said I would like a word with him immediately.

After a luncheon at Prunier's, my return passage was assured. But the Colonel, who was no fool, was sceptical, I felt, as to my true reason for visiting Poland. I still feel that I owe him an apology for the trouble that I caused him, and ask forgiveness for the white lies that I told.

The first problem of my journey was now surmounted. But how was I to overcome the second and far more difficult problem of landing on Polish soil? E—, my officer accomplice, suggested that I should ask the Port of London Authority for a seaman's

card. So off I went to the offices at Thames-side. The official there was pleasant and polite, but quite firm when he told me that such cards were only issued to personnel signed on on the ship's books.

'Of course, if the Captain will sign you on, that would be a different matter,' he added.

The suggestion was well meant, but since my old friend, the Captain of the *Baltavia* was in hospital with appendicitis, and I did not know his successor, it was not particularly helpful. But in the passage, I ran into E— and explained to him what had happened.

'Captain L— is due here at noon,' he said. 'I'll introduce you to him. There's no harm in asking.'

Promptly at noon, a small man in a grey trilby and blue suit arrived, and I was introduced to him. Without much hope, I told him that I was travelling in his ship to Poland and back, but as I had no visa it would be impossible for me to go ashore. It would be a pity, I said ruefully, not to see a little of the country. Would he consider signing me on, I asked, adding that I naturally needed no pay.

He seemed to think the suggestion not unreasonable.

'I'm not sure of the duties of my officers, as this is my first voyage in the *Baltavia*,' he said. Then he turned to E—.

'There's no assistant purser,' the latter suggested helpfully.

Before I scarcely knew what was happening, I found myself on the ship's list as assistant purser,

unpaid, and a temporary officer in the Merchant Navy.

Few of my friends or relations knew of my plan. As I said goodbye to Robert C—, a famous shot and crime expert, he looked up from his office desk and said: 'Stay aboard, Henry. Don't go ashore. Leave it to the others.'

Little did I think that he, the last friend to whom I spoke before sailing, would be the first to welcome me on my return after much water had flowed under the bridges.

The last of her passengers aboard and the hatches battened down on her cargo, the Baltavia slipped from the quayside of the London Docks on the evening tide on May 12th, 1750. As I leant over the rail and watched the silhouette of Tower Bridge gradually recede and finally disappear in the fading light, I thought to myself that in ten days or so I should see it again with Barbara at my side and with my mission completed.

The sea was like the proverbial mill-pond and I was content to sit in a deck chair or look over the ship's stern watching the calm green waters of the North Sea foaming in her wake, happy in the knowledge that, for a day or two at least, there was nothing more that I could do.

As we approached the Kiel Canal, we ran into thick fog and for some hours were forced to anchor, our fog-horn blaring the while. Ships passing close at sea have always thrilled me, but the spectacle becomes weird and eerie when they appear like phantoms out of the fog. But now I found the

enforced delay intolerable and I was unable to extract any pleasure from the scene. Luckily, however, a light breeze sprang up and the fog cleared magically.

On the afternoon of the fourth day we turned the corner of the Hel peninsula and Gdynia lay an hour's steaming ahead. The early summer sunlight was glittering on the still waters of the Baltic, the sky was flecked with a few scattered wisps of cirrus cloud, as I felt the excitement mounting in me with the approach of land.

I had already donned some of the trimmings of my temporary mercantile appointment—white shirt and shoulder badges, bought from Gieves, dark blue serge trousers, borrowed from E—, and the regulation black shoes. It had been agreed that I should remain below and not show myself on deck when the port officials and security officers came aboard. I had no reason to think that I would be recognised, but wished at any rate to avoid meeting Colonel H—'s son, who would be acting as the shipping agent in his father's absence and might unwittingly ask some embarrassing questions.

After an hour or so, E— came to my cabin triumphantly waving a piece of paper. 'Here's your pass to go ashore,' he laughed.

I took the short printed form, bearing the official Polish stamp, that was the passport to my meeting with Barbara, and my hand trembled. It all seemed suddenly absurdly simple, so that I wondered almost subconsciously whether things were not going too well.

In my instructions to Barbara I had given her a

rendezvous in front of the Hotel Central at half-past seven on either the 15th, 16th or 17th of May—preferably the earliest date. So just after seven o'clock, E— and I went ashore dressed in civilian clothes. Before leaving the ship, we had discussed our plans for getting Barbara aboard. Two of the other officers had agreed to help; W— and Frank. W— was to break the switch and douse the deck lights, while Frank's job was to put a rope ladder over the side just below the bridge. While all this was going on, E— was to create a diversion to distract the attention of the sentry on duty near the after gangway, and I was to help Barbara with her first step on the ladder.

Well on time, E— and I were pacing the pavement outside the Hotel Central. Half-past seven came and went and there was no sign of Barbara. By eight I was certain that she was not coming.

More disappointed and upset perhaps than I should have been, I met the midnight train from Warsaw, and after a sleepless night, was on the station, again waited for the train at eight o'clock the following morning. Barbara was not amongst the passengers. Almost sick with despair at the frustration of my plans, I reasoned that she could not now possibly arrive on the 16th.

What had happened, I wondered? What could have prevented her from coming? Had she received my last letter? Such questions tortured my mind. Feeling that at all costs I must get in touch with Barbara, I sent her a telegram saying that I was waiting and that it was imperative that she came at

once. I then put in a long-distance telephone call to B-F., the Canadian girl in Warsaw who had forwarded my letters to Barbara.

When this call came through and B-F. realised who it was on the telephone, I could immediately sense her amazement and horror at my foolhardiness at returning to Poland. Hardly able to control her voice, she promised, however, to contact Barbara as soon as possible.

This accomplished, I enquired at the local garage about the cost of hiring a car from Gdynia to Warsaw. Since, however, my seaman's pass only covered my movements to within ten miles of the port, and there was still the possibility—faint though it seemed—that Barbara would arrive in time, reason for once prevailed.

That evening E— was on duty, so I went ashore with Frank to keep the last rendezvous with Barbara. Since I had met all the trains from Warsaw, I had little hope that she would arrive as we paced up and down outside the hotel.

Then suddenly I looked up and scarcely believing my eyes, I saw her. A hundred yards away I recognised the tall, fair-haired figure walking slowly towards us. Dressed in the same grey coat that she had worn on the day when we first met, she nevertheless seemed to me to stand out from the drab passers-by like some beautiful goddess. Hardly able to speak, I mumbled to Frank, 'There she is!'

At that moment of meeting, Barbara, like myself, was so overcome that we stood confronting each other, our faces unsmiling without saying a word.

our minds seething with the pent-up emotions of those long months of separation. For those few seconds we were not conscious of anything or anyone but our two selves.

Then the tension broke and in a spate of words Barbara told me all that had happened. She had received my telegram and the message from B-F., who had been in a terrible state of nerves. That same afternoon she had caught the plane from Warsaw.

Frank introduced, the three of us repaired to a nearby restaurant where we sat down to a meal and a bottle of Starovin, our favourite brand of vodka. Frank had no Polish, so he and Barbara talked in German with which was mingled the Polish she spoke to me, and her newly-learnt English phrases. Now we were talking gaily of the presents I had sent her since leaving Poland, of our mutual friends in Warsaw and the hardness of the winter now passed. But underlying the gaiety of her smile and the vivacity of her laughter I sensed a trace of sadness and even apprehension. I felt that there was a question mark in her mind. Sure enough, when supper was over, Barbara said that there was something about which she wished to talk to me alone, and suggested that we should go for a walk.

Leaving Frank at the table, we went out into the street. The May night was dark and moonless, but the indigo sky was spattered with brilliant stars. It was a night that I was long to remember. We walked together down the street and into a dark, deserted square, where we found a low stone wall on which we half leant, half sat.

Barbara was happy and thrilled to see me after the months of separation. She told me, almost in a whisper, that she loved me still and longed to be with me.

Her hand which I held in mine was cold.

'Henry,' she said, 'I dare not leave the country illegally. I dread the power of the Secret Police.'

She had spent three years in a German concentration camp, she reasoned, and could not face another such ordeal.

Understanding all that she felt, I explained that the chances of her getting a passport were virtually nil. Then I reminded her that months ago she had agreed to escape and that I had come to Poland myself to see that all went well.

'If you are not willing now, we must forgo for ever any hopes of a life together,' I argued.

Half reassured, she returned with me to the restaurant. After a final vodka, Frank went back to the Baltavia, whither Barbara and I were to follow him after leaving her belongings at the hotel.

Shortly after eleven o'clock, we came out into the deserted street and I hailed a taxi. On that drive down to the docks Barbara was still trembling with nerves and beset with fears of the Security Police. As we neared the ship, she was almost beside herself with terror. I did my best to reassure her, but in the process found that I too was beginning to feel jittery. Ridiculously, I thought of those surgeons who will not operate upon their own wives for fear that the bonds of affection may strangle their judgment. There can be no doubt that on that fateful night my

state of mind was such that I was not capable of appraising the situation in its true proportions. Predominant in my mind was the desperate thought that this was our last chance and that, come what may, Barbara must be got aboard the ship. The risks that we ran and the perils that lay ahead seemed unimportant at that time. Looking back as I did so often afterwards, I realised that Barbara's fears, amounting almost to hysteria, and my determination to carry on at whatever the cost, were not the ingredients for success.

Paying off the taxi, I left Barbara in the shadows while I went aboard the Baltavia to alert the others of our arrival. As I went up the gangway, I noticed with horror that the guard had been doubled and that two armed members of the frontier guard were on duty.

After a hurried conference with the others and seeing that they were all set to put our prearranged plans into operation, I collected some men's clothes for Barbara to wear. I wasted as little time as possible as I knew only too well that in her present state she could not be left alone.

As I neared the spot where I had left her I heard her whispered cry, 'Henryk! Henryk! Is that you?'

She was shaking in every limb as in a fever. I helped her into the trousers and duffle coat. Then, with a man's soft hat pulled well down over her face, she was ready.

I took her arm in mine and we walked slowly and silently towards our goal—the forepeak of the S.S. Baltavia.

Save for the twinkling stars, the night was pitch black and the quayside but sparsely lit by a few widely-spaced lamps. The loading of the ship had ended for the day. Barbara and I and the two uniformed figures, whose silhouettes were faintly visible at the stern, were the only human occupants of the stage. I heard the distant chimes of a church clock slowly striking the hour of midnight. A line of empty railway trucks covered our approach to the ship and as we crawled under the wheels of the last of them, I saw the lights aboard the Baltavia go out. W— had played his part perfectly.

Then the critical moment was upon us. I glanced up at the ship's side, and, as I did so, I saw the rope ladder being slowly lowered into position. As it came to rest, the bottom rung dangled a few feet from the edge of the quay. By good fortune a giant crane had been left exactly opposite the forepart of the ship, and Barbara and I paused for a brief second hidden by its massive structure.

I looked towards the two sentries. They had their backs to us and were facing a tall dark figure on the gangway, whom I assumed to be E—. Now was our chance. Now or never. Barbara's face was pale but calm as, grasping her hand, I led her across the short open space which separated the crane from the ship's side. Without hesitation now she seized the ladder. With a strong heave and a push, I placed her foot on the bottom rung.

After what seemed an eternity, but what was in reality only twenty or thirty seconds, I saw Barbara disappear over the rail. Then I quickly retraced my

steps and approached the Baltavia from the opposite direction. The stolid, almost bovine, faces of the sentries showed no sign of animation as one of them glanced casually at my pass.

As I climbed the gangway, I congratulated myself that the worst was over.

Frank had taken Barbara to E—'s cabin on the top deck, just behind the bridge. There I found her dressed in a blue sweater and long serge trousers that suited her slim figure to perfection. Her face was now radiant with happiness and relief.

As we sat together on the bunk, E— joined us and told me that one of the sentries had said that he had seen a man climb aboard by a rope ladder. The fellow, according to E—, had been satisfied when he was told that the man was a sailor and one of the crew.

I immediately suggested that it might be worthwhile finding a sailor who would be willing to support this story. If necessary, I said that I would be quite prepared to pay him handsomely for doing so.

'There's no need for that,' E— said. 'I'm certain that the guard believed my version of what he had seen. Don't let's worry any more about it.'

Still only half convinced, I reasoned that if indeed the frontier policeman had not accepted E—'s story he would immediately have raised the alarm. So I left it at that.

Not for months was I to know the true story of E—'s conversation. Probably I shall never know the reason why he told me what he did. But then I was

not to know that the sand in the hour-glass of my fate and Barbara's was running low.

The four of us had a drink or two in E—'s cabin while we discussed where Barbara should sleep for the night. It was finally decided that until the ship sailed in the morning, she would be safest with W—, whose cabin was aft on the main deck. No member of the crew had access to it, and it was not searched by the port authorities before sailing. Once on the high seas, Barbara could be taken up to the sickbay on the boat deck for which, as we carried no doctor, E— held the keys. Other than ourselves, no-one knew of her presence aboard and we wished to keep it a secret.

The hour was now late and I suddenly felt overwhelmed by all the strain and excitement of the day. I glanced at Barbara. Her face was calm and peaceful now, but her eyes were heavy with weariness.

'We all need some sleep,' I said. 'Let's pack up.'

Gulping our last drinks, we silently left E—'s cabin in single file and quickly traversed the deserted alleyways of the Baltavia. Kissing Barbara lightly on the cheek outside W—'s cabin, I went to my accommodation on the deck above. No sooner was my head on the pillow than I fell into a heavy sleep.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I WAS AWAKENED by the tramp, tramp of heavy hob-nailed boots on the deck overhead. Fully conscious in an instant, I had an immediate presentiment of disaster. Seizing my overcoat, I jumped out of bed and dashed to the door, determined to find out what was happening, especially to Barbara. Cautiously opening the door, I peered down the corridor, and there at the top of the stairs leading to the dining saloon, I saw to my horror the back view of a sinister uniformed figure. I realised with a sickening feeling at the pit of my stomach that the way was already barred. As I stood there, I wondered whether the first nail had not been hammered in the coffin of my

liberty. Yet, even then, I had not the slightest inkling of what lay ahead. A free man does not feel the bonds of captivity slowly tightening about him, for he cannot imagine an experience which has never happened to him. He cannot sense the loss of that most precious of all possessions, the right to come and go as he will.

I closed the cabin door and went back to bed, but not to sleep. Powerless, I could only lie and wait, hoping against hope that Barbara would not be discovered, and that W— would not have his cabin searched. Perhaps, I consoled myself, if they were looking for a man, they would not suspect a woman. Too late I remembered that Mac had declared that in an eventuality such as this, he would have said that Barbara was his girl-friend whom he had brought aboard for the night.

Suddenly, as I lay on the bed, my mind wildly searching for some thread of consolation, the door opened and the light was switched on. Half blinded by the light, I vaguely saw a pair of baleful eyes, set in a swarthy Mongol-like face, staring down at me. Without a word, the short, almost squat, bull-necked figure, wearing a light coloured overcoat, took three quick paces across the cabin, and ran his hands over the bedclothes.

It was not until later that I was to find out that my visitor was a colonel in the Secret Police. Finding nothing, he left the cabin as silently as he had entered, and for a moment I had a faint hope that Barbara's presence aboard had not been discovered.

The pale light of dawn filtered through the port-

hole as I slowly shaved and dressed. Once more, I opened the cabin door, this time to find a khaki-clad soldier, with a bayonet fixed on his rifle, standing in the passage immediately outside. As he raised his weapon, I shut the door. 'Cabin arrest,' I thought to myself.

Hardly had I destroyed my papers, flushing the fragments down the lavatory in the adjoining bathroom, when the door opened and the saturnine, tight-lipped countenance of my visitor of the night reappeared.

'Your passport,' he demanded curtly. Glancing at the photograph, he asked, 'Is that your brother?'

'No, it's me,' I told him.

As he looked through the pages of that document, I saw an expression of surprise, mingled with comprehension, flicker across the hard, cruel face.

'You are to remain in your cabin,' he ordered, closing the door behind him.

I had the feeling then, mounting almost to a conviction, that Barbara had been found and that this man had already heard her story. As these thoughts gathered momentum in my mind, I began to experience the first terrible agonies of remorse. Poor, poor Barbara ; all her worst fears, her dread of the Secret Police, and her terror of being caught, had been realised. To what ghastly fate had I condemned her? How could I ever atone for what I had done? The terrible responsibility for whatever might happen to her was mine. I thought hopelessly that her faith in me must surely have died for ever.

By mid-morning, there came a sharp rap on the

door. I opened it to discover four or five figures standing in the corridor, amongst whom I recognised B—, the Consul-General at Gdynsk. A tall, scholarly-looking man, newly arrived behind the Iron Curtain from the calm of diplomatic life in America, the eyes behind his rimless glasses looked harassed. A dark-haired little man, with the figure of a near hunchback, was the first to enter. In carefully enunciated but slowly spoken English, he announced that he wished to examine me in the presence of the British Consul. He, too, I was to discover later, was a member of the Secret Police. Soon, the small cabin was filled with civilian-clothed Polish officials. Without preamble, the little hunchback stated that a Polish subject, Barbara Bobrowska, had been found in a cabin on the ship. She had no papers, and had confessed that she had come aboard for the purpose of leaving Poland illegally. Further, he said, she had confessed that she had been aided and abetted by me. What had I to say?

My worst fears of the early morning realised, I saw no point in denying my part in the affair, and so acknowledged my guilt. In my account of what had taken place I was able to lay stress on the major part I had played in the escape, and also on Barbara's unwillingness to leave Poland except by legal methods. Captain L— was called in and gave evidence to the effect that I was shown on Baltavia's papers as assistant purser, but was able to deny that he had any knowledge of the plot. The poor fellow looked thoroughly mystified and ill at ease. I had the impression that this was not only his first but his

last trip to Gdynia, and that never again would he sign on any bogus members of his crew.

A short while after the investigation ended, the Consul returned to my cabin alone. 'I am telephoning the Embassy,' he said, 'to find out whether the Polish authorities have the right to arrest you and remove you from a British ship.'

I felt certain in my own mind that as we were in Polish territorial waters, they not only had this right, but would most surely exercise it if they wished to do so. There were, however, many questions I wanted to ask him if indeed I was to be arrested. But as I started to speak, he interrupted me, and, glancing nervously over his shoulder, said, 'The authorities don't like me to speak to you. It is against their regulations.'

With those words, he hurriedly left me. Little did I realise then that this was the last time I was to talk to an Englishman for over a year!

Lunch was brought to me in the cabin by the ship's steward, and, although I had not eaten since the night before, I could hardly touch the food he set before me. Soon afterwards, the door was flung open, and outside stood the little hunchback and two frontier policemen.

'We are taking you ashore for further questioning,' he said.

'I should like to have a word with the British Consul,' I told him. 'He is in touch with our Embassy in Warsaw over my case.'

'He is not here,' he answered. 'In any case, you will be brought back in three or four hours.' With

that, he made a sign to the guards, who placed themselves one on each side of me.

I was marched between them to the after deck, and, as I stepped through the doorway, I saw to my astonishment that the deck was packed with armed troops. A glance over their heads showed me that the quay, too, was crowded with soldiers. Behind the last line of troops, I caught a glimpse of the faces of the ship's company and noticed their expressions of curiosity mingled with sympathy. For a second, I looked W— in the eye. Then he turned hurriedly away.

'Poor devil!' I thought, 'he's feeling pretty nervous himself.'

Then there was a break in the ranks on deck, and through it walked the tall, blue-clad figure of Barbara. Beneath her gleaming blonde hair, her face was pale and drawn, and there were dark rings under her eyes that told of a sleepless night. We looked at each other for a long second, and in the brown depths of her eyes I saw only anguish and misery; no sign of reproach. My cup of bitterness was full.

For a moment or two we stood almost shoulder to shoulder, and I tried to whisper some word of comfort to her.

'Keep quiet!' barked the hunchback. 'You are not to speak to each other.' Then he gave an order in Polish, and with her escort on either side of her, Barbara was led down the gangway. Her head bowed on her shoulders, she looked a pathetically sad and solitary figure. After so short a time on British soil,

now with all hope of freedom shattered, she vanished from my sight.

A black saloon car drew up on the quayside below the gangway. 'You are to go ashore now,' ordered my captor. I expostulated, saying that I wished to see the Consul, and at the same time, demanded to know if he had a warrant for my arrest. He did not answer. Then, struggling, I was half led, half carried off the ship.

In my ears I heard cries of 'Eisler! Eisler!' from the Polish onlookers of the scene. I remembered that not long before, Gerhard Eisler, a Polish Communist, charged with sedition in the U.S.A., had slipped out of that country in the Polish ship, Batory. On arrival at Southampton, he had been taken off the ship by the British at the request of the American F.B.I., who applied for his extradition. After an immediate hearing in England, it had been ruled that there was not sufficient evidence against him, and he was allowed to proceed to Poland. I wondered now whether I should receive similar justice at the hands of his countrymen.

I took one last look at the Baltavia, and as I did so I caught a glimpse of Frank and E— leaning over the rails on the boat deck. They looked apprehensive and gloomy. Were they to be involved in all this, I wondered?

Unceremoniously, I was bundled into the back of the car, where I found myself seated between two young thugs in civilian clothes. Their hair was close-cropped, and they were tieless. Their faces were callous and brutal, and they struck me as being

typical products of the Communist Youth Movement.

We drove through the streets of Gdynia to a single-storeyed villa on the outskirts of the town, the headquarters, I imagined, of the local security police. I was conducted to a room on the ground floor. Sparsely furnished with a table, three hard chairs and a filing cabinet or two, it must normally have been used as an office of some kind. A uniformed guard with a rifle and bayonet stood in one corner. I sat at a table facing one of my escorts from the car. I can see to this day the sardonic look on his face as he picked his black nicotine-stained teeth. It was by then five o'clock, and remembering the statement that I should be returned to the Baltavia after further questioning, I asked when I should be going back.

'I do not know,' was the reply, and then the toothpick continued its operation.

In the next few days I was to become used to this stock reply to all my questions. After a few more abortive attempts, I realised that it was waste of time making conversation.

Gradually, through the window I saw the light of that fateful May 17th slipping away as the golden colours of the sunset turned to grey. As they did so, the flames of hope, although not yet extinguished in my mind, began to dwindle.

Next morning, I was taken from the house to another waiting car. Stiff in every limb, for during the night I had had no couch other than the wooden

floor of the office where I had snatched a few hours of troubled sleep, for one moment a faint hope flickered in my consciousness. Perhaps they were taking me back? My questions brought the usual refrain and soon, as the car sped on, my hopes died stillborn.

We drove the few miles from Gdynia to Gdansk (the Polish name for the ancient city of Danzig) and, in the centre of the much-battered town, the car drew up in front of a pair of massive, iron-studded, wooden gates, set in a high wall. The driver got out and pulled the handle of an old-fashioned bell. As its last peal echoed in the silence, I saw an eye peer through a small orifice. Then, with a screech of rusty hinges, the doors slowly opened to close behind us as we drove in.

My heart missed a beat as if a steel band was tightening round my chest. 'My God!' I thought, 'What have I done?'

Before being hustled into the building, I stood for a moment in the cobbled courtyard, and in that short space of time I had the chance of examining my surroundings. The building, four storeys high, was obviously centuries old and constructed of red brick. The small windows of one wing were heavily barred. It was the headquarters of the security police for the northern sector of Poland.

Once more I found myself a prisoner in a bleakly furnished office. By day my custodians were multi-clad young gangsters of the U.B., and as each took his turn of duty, a revolver was thrust into the

drawer of the desk. By night, a soldier stood or paced the room, a Sten gun at the ready.

Any mention of the British Consul was met by a shrug of the shoulders, so that I suspected that these young hooligans knew nothing and cared less as to my fate.

One night, however, a young soldier, with the good-natured face of a peasant, proved more tractable. After a few preliminaries, he volunteered the information that he had done a turn of guard duty on the girl who had tried to escape by sea.

'How is she? Where is she?' I asked, crazy for news of Barbara.

'She is in a room along the corridor. A woman looks after her in the day. She seems quite well—not very happy, perhaps,' he told me.

'Another night you may be guarding her again. I should like to send a message to her,' I suggested persuasively.

He nodded his head. With a pencil-stub that I had managed to secrete during the day, I wrote on a scrap of paper a few words in Polish: 'We were very unlucky. I will wait for you afterwards.'

The young soldier promised to deliver this brief note when he had the opportunity.

Those early summer days in the latter half of May, 1750, were days of warm sunlight and clear blue skies, but for me they will always recall the beginning of an anguish of mind, a mental torture which was to be my companion for many moons. The shock of confinement, the sudden loss of freedom, is one that

those who have never experienced it can hardly understand.

For a day or so, the faintest hopes lingered on that the Baltavia had not yet sailed. But soon I realised that she must have left without me. Then it was that black despair seemed to possess me and the sub-conscious knowledge now became a stark reality that I was in the hands and at the mercy of the security police. Secure before in the possession of the immunity offered by my diplomatic visa, I had often listened, credulous but unmoved, to the stories of the machinations of the secret police and of its methods, based on the system of the Tsarist Cheka, the Communist Ogpu and the M.V.D. The words on the first page of my passport, signed by the Foreign Secretary, came vividly to my mind, and I wondered what respect would be shown to me as a British subject. I speculated, too, whether the Polish conception of justice or their treatment of me now as a foreign national, with no diplomatic privileges, would in fact differ from that meted out to their own countrymen.

One morning, shortly afterwards, occurred an incident which increased still further the bitterness of my thoughts and the tension of my mind. Each day at an early hour, possibly about six o'clock (I had no watch as this, together with the rest of the personal possessions in my pockets, had been taken from me), I was conducted down the passage to do my morning toilet. Ablutions were, of necessity, of the simplest, as the washing facilities consisted merely of a cold tap and basin. Nevertheless, I usually contrived to strip and douche myself all over. The

strong cold water refreshed me and helped to tone up muscles aching from a night spent on the bare boards.

On this particular morning, I was being taken back to my room when I heard a shouted command : 'Halt ! Stand and face the wall.'

As I turned the corner from the lavatory into the corridor, I saw the slim blue-clad figure of Barbara and managed to get one quick glance at her expressionless profile. After that, as I paced the floor of my cell or sat on the hard office chair gazing blankly at the wall, I thought bitterly how little happiness and how much sorrow I had brought her. What penalty, I wondered, would she suffer for those brief weeks we had spent together?

Hopeless as my position seemed and helpless as I was, I felt that I must not, could not, forsake her now in the moment when she most needed me. Then, into my thoughts intruded the clear fresh voices of young girls singing one of the marching songs for which Poland is famous. As the sound of their voices drifted to me through the window, as the sweet notes 'rose and fell in lovely harmony, I reflected how happy they sounded. It seemed to me, a prisoner, that the words of their song rang out : 'We're Free ! We're Free !'

CHAPTER EIGHT

A WEEK WENT by in which I wondered desperately what was to happen to me. The promise that I would be returned to the Baltavia after further questioning was as hollow and meaningless as the eternal 'Nie Wiem' (I don't know) and the shrug of the shoulders that were the answers to all the questions I asked about seeing the Consul.

Alone in my cheerless room, I had ample time to recall the stories I had been told of Polish men leaving their homes in the morning with a happy 'I shall be back at the usual time this evening.' Those were their last words as they hurried to 'catch the tram to their business, and they were often the last

words that they ever spoke to their wives and families.

When the evening came and went and there was no sign of a husband's return, the anxious wife might begin by suspecting an accident.

'In that case, I should have heard,' she would say to the neighbours. Then, the dread thought would form in her mind, chilling her very soul: 'The U.B.'

Hurriedly gathering together a shirt, some underclothes and a few pairs of socks, she would make the ghastly tour of the Warsaw gaols, and in a terrified whisper give the name of her husband. Only when the pathetic parcel was finally accepted by the gaoler at the gate, would she know for certain that her husband was indeed in the hands of the Secret Police, and already considered guilty, although not convicted, of a political crime against the State.

No letters would she be allowed to write, no letters would she receive. The prisoner would be kept utterly and completely isolated from the world. Banished from all human contacts, he would live in a grave-like silence. In actual fact, the first news that Barbara's mother was to receive of her daughter after the latter left home to meet me in Gdynia was from a friend who, listening to the B.B.C. news in Polish, had heard that Barbara had been arrested while attempting to escape the country.

No Englishman, secure in the meaning and application of the Habeas Corpus Act and the rights of man dating back through the centuries, can possibly appreciate the stark reality of the powers of a Police State.

Yet, I told myself over and over again, I was no political prisoner and, in any case, I was an Englishman. My country had an Embassy whose duty it was to see that I was treated in accordance with the world principles of justice. But barely had these thoughts entered my mind when the door opened and my hunchbacked inquisitor aboard the Baltavia entered. His oversized head was lowered on to his chest, and the expression in his beetle-browed eyes was one of malevolent triumph.

'Come with me,' he said sharply, and it was then that I realised for the first time that he, too, was a member of the Secret Police.

Together we traversed the long corridors of the central block of the building. At the end of a passage, he opened a door and, passing through a small ante-room, we entered a long, well-appointed room with high ceilings, whose windows were hung with bright cretonne curtains. The floor was covered with a Turkish carpet, and in the far corner was a light-coloured oak desk, at which two men were seated. It was the man facing me across this desk who immediately held my attention and interest. I was to learn later that he was Colonel Jacek Rozanski, the Public Prosecutor and head of a department in the Secret Police directly responsible to the Minister of Security, Radkiewicz. The son of well-to-do Jewish parents of bourgeois stock, he had received a university education and had been since long before the war an ardent Communist. At this time he must have been in his early fifties. But all that I knew at the time was that sitting beneath a life-sized photograph of Stalin was

an individual of striking, almost dominating appearance. His complexion was sallow, his jowls clean-shaven, and his jet-black hair carefully oiled. His piercing dark eyes stared at me from beneath heavy, tufted brows. It was the expression in those eyes that gripped my attention. Sadistic, sinister, Machiavellian, their cold scrutiny was as hypnotic as a snake's. As I looked at him, I thought that he possessed the most evil face I had ever seen; a face whose expression was without mercy and devoid of compassion.

I felt a cold shiver run down my spine, for this face of the man who was to torture my mind into subjection will haunt me for ever.

From Rozanski, I glanced to his companion. The latter was a younger man, short, well-built, with a pock-marked face and eyes as hard as granite. His name, I heard later, was Antonisiewicz and he, too, was a colonel of the U.B.

The hunchback, whose name I never heard, sat in the chair on Rozanski's left. He was to act as interpreter as neither of the others spoke any English, and although I myself had a reasonable competence in Polish, I preferred to have the opportunity of listening in both languages.

'Sit down, Mr. Turner,' Rozanski said in a harsh voice, and, as he did so, his hooded eyes flicked over me like those of a rattlesnake before striking. 'What have you got to say?' he asked.

'It was very foolish of me to have embarked upon this adventure,' I replied. 'I see now how stupid and wrong I was to persuade Barbara Bobrowska to try to leave Poland illegally. I am very fond of her, and

that is why I behaved as I did. She should, of course, have applied for a passport and left the country in the normal way. I am very sorry but——'

Rozanski's sallow face darkened, and he beat on the desk with his clenched fist.

'Mr. Turner,' he rapped out, 'we are not interested in Miss Bobrowska or her leaving the country. I am in charge of the counter-espionage department of the Ministry of Security, and I have here,' he indicated the files of papers in front of him, 'information on your activities when you were Air Attaché at the British Embassy. You were in touch with two Polish traitors, Skalski and Slawinski. They have been arrested and have confessed that they were working for you.' His voice now raised almost to a scream, his eyes blazing with frenzy, he leant across the desk, pointing an accusing finger at me.

'You are a spy!' he yelled. 'You and your network of foul informers!'

Before his menacing stare I recoiled involuntarily, and as his accusations against me mounted, my worst fears, until now hidden in my subconscious mind, became alive. I was to be investigated by the Secret Police on my activities as a member of the Embassy. I shuddered at the thought, but aloud I said, 'But during my appointment as Air Attaché I had a diplomatic visa issued by your Government which gave me special rights of immunity. That privilege still exists so far as that period is concerned. Surely you respect it? In any case,' I added, 'I am a British subject, and I wish to have the opportunity of speaking with my Consul in Gdansk.'

Rozanski leant back in his chair, eyes half-hidden beneath the heavy lids, and a cynical smile hovering about his lips.

'Mr. Turner,' he said softly, 'you are now in the hands of the Polish Security. You will have the opportunity of seeing the British authorities, but we have plenty of time—plenty of time.' Then, in a voice so quiet that I could scarcely hear it, he asked, 'What about Barbara? I have spoken to her; she is very unhappy, poor girl. She did not wish to escape. What will happen to her? Do you ever think of what your foolish action has done to her?'

He made a sign to the hunchback, who turned to me and said, 'Your investigation is over for today. Come with me.'

With Rozanski's last words ringing in my ears, I followed him to the door, where an armed soldier stood waiting.

'Take him to his cell,' the hunchback ordered.

Turning in the opposite direction from whence I had come, the guard conducted me down several flights of stone stairs until we arrived at the ground floor of the building. There we were met by a uniformed figure whose close-cropped head, hairy face and long arms reminded me of a gorilla. A bunch of keys hung on a chain from his waist. Without a word, he led me along a narrow stone-flagged passage, lined on either side by closed doors.

The gaoler, for I quickly realised his function, selected a key from the bunch, placed it in a keyhole and turned the lock. Before I knew where I was, I heard the door shut behind me and the sound of the

key turning for the second time. With that door firmly locked and a barred window facing me, I was indeed a prisoner in the truest meaning of the word.

It was a few seconds before I realised that I was not alone. Reclining on one of the two beds was a man with dark brown eyes sunken in a face white as chalk. Slowly, as if bereft of all energy, he raised himself from the bed and managed to stand up.

‘Henryk Duznicki,’ he said, holding out his hand.

He came from the small town of Szczecinek in Poland. One night, three months or so ago, he had been woken from his sleep by two plain-clothes members of the Secret Police. They had produced no warrant, but said that they wished to question him. In the three months that followed, he had been interrogated twice on a few simple matters.

‘I still have no idea why I have been arrested,’ he told me, ‘but here I am, and here I shall stay if the whim of the Secret Police so ordains,’ he added with a strange resignation. ‘But you are a foreigner, an Englishman, so they will not be able to treat you like that,’ he said.

How I envied him the philosophy with which he seemed able to resign himself to his fate! But with the initial meeting with Rozanski ever present in my mind, I could not share his opinion as to my future treatment.

The small, heavily barred window of our cell looked out on to the courtyard into which I had been driven when I first arrived at the U.B. headquarters. But barely had I had time to look about me or finish the brief introductory conversation with my cell-mate,

before I saw to my amazement the figure of Barbara coming down the steps from the wing opposite. Dressed in her grey three-quarter-length coat and long blue trousers, she was followed by a shorter woman. Descending the steps some fifty yards distant, she walked slowly towards us. Ten yards short of the window, she turned and continued on the circle of her exercise on the cobblestones. Her cheeks were as pale as if the blood had been drained from them and there was a look of utter despair on her face as she plodded round the yard. At first, she did not see me at the window; then, as she looked up, she gave a faint start of recognition as she saw my face pressed tightly between the narrow bars. On the second round of her walk, she raised her hand to wave and, as she did so, I caught a glimpse of a man watching us in the shadow of a nearby window. With a pang of horror, I realised what a master stroke of evil genius it was to allow me, helpless in my cage, this glimpse of the woman I loved. This fleeting glance of Barbara's tragic plight had been planned to torture me, and I realised then that with Rozanski no holds were barred nor any card too mean to play, for he held all the trumps. It was then that I fully appreciated the significance of his words 'Mamy Czas' — 'we have time' — and remembered that the constant drip of the smallest drop of water will wear away the toughest stone.

Of the many days that I was to spend in prison before my trial, I sometimes think that those immediately following my first interview with Rozanski were the worst. My make-up as a physical extrovert

did not lend itself to the stoical endurance required to counter the initial shock of confinement. I had not the philosophical outlook necessary to endure calmly the claustrophobic cell. An Englishman in a Polish prison, I felt so utterly cut off from life and so completely alone. The only relief for the prisoner is when he sinks into a troubled sleep, and dreams become the safety-valve for the subconscious mind. But even merciful sleep is shattered by the shock of awakening to the stark horror of the truth that beats like a hammer into one's brain. No future purgatory in this or any other life will compare with the utter desolation of my feelings during those days of blank despair.

On the third night in the cell I was awakened by the sound of the door opening and the sudden switching on of the light. One of the guards, on duty outside night and day, told me to get up and dress myself. Body and mind still heavy with sleep, I stumbled into my clothes, and then together we mounted those same stairs that I had descended after my first interview with Rozanski.

I found myself once again in the big room where my preliminary interrogation had taken place. After the dim light in my cell and the darkness of the corridors, my eyes blinked under the brilliance of the high-powered electric lights. Rozanski sat as usual at the centre of the big desk, and on his right was the man with the pock-marked face. But in the third seat at the desk, in place of the hunchback, I saw a woman. Fiftyish, heavy-boned, her hard face showed no trace of feminine kindness or sympathy. A rabid Communist and fanatical as any Gestapo woman of

the concentration camps, I was to learn to loathe the sight of Pani Lak in the months to come, for, with brief exceptions, she was from then on to act as interpreter during my endless interrogations.

Rozanski waved me to a wooden stool in front of the desk. 'Mr. Turner,' he said, 'I have allowed you a few days to think over our first conversation. You are in a very serious position. You are in the hands of the Polish Security, and we have evidence,' he tapped the papers in front of him, 'that when you were Air Attaché at the British Embassy you exceeded your rights as a diplomat by engaging in espionage activities and that you organised a net of spies, including the traitors Skalski and Slawinski.'

'I agree that I knew Skalski and Slawinski,' I admitted. 'I met them not long after I first arrived in Poland. Many Poles served in the British R.A.F. during the war. Many of them had fine records, and none finer than Skalski, who was a brilliant fighter pilot and became a Group Captain in my Service. It was only natural that when I arrived in this country I should wish to meet some of those who had been comrades-in-arms with me against the Germans. They came to my house, it is true. But we met purely socially. We talked about our experiences in the war, and if we did mention the air forces of today, it was in a general sense as professional aviators.'

'Lies!' Rozanski thundered at me, his reptilian eyes boring into mine, 'all lies! You are not telling a word of truth. I have here the evidence of both these two men and many others concerning your illegal activities while you were in this country. I will read you

extracts from their statements. Skalski: "I went to Turner's villa at Zalesie, where, after dinner, he asked me many questions about the Polish Air Force." Slawinski: "Turner was very interested in the composition of the P.A.F. units. . . . Turner agreed to send back to England a parcel which I would give him that contained a micro-film of secret Polish publications." "

What mental suffering these two brave men must have experienced to have made such confessions, I thought with horror; confessions that were so basically untrue in all but the very widest sense.

'It is more than two years ago that I saw Skalski last,' I told my inquisitor. 'I do not remember that we had any such detailed conversation. As for Slawinski, he certainly asked me to have a parcel sent to England for him. He was to have brought it one evening, but he never turned up. In any case, he did not tell me what was in it, so I had no idea that it contained this micro-film that you have mentioned. I certainly did not know that Slawinski was a spy.' I paused for a moment, and then said, 'Before we go any further, may I please be told on what charge I have been arrested and am now held in custody? Also, please tell me whether or not I may see the Consul?'

'You are wasting my time, Mr. Turner,' Rozanski said coldly. 'I am a very busy man. You will do yourself no good if you do not answer my questions properly. I would remind you that on your behaviour depends not only your fate but that of Mis z Bobrowska also. She has had a hard life and is not strong.

As for your Embassy, it is not very interested in you, and the Consul does not wish to see you. They are not pleased with you,' he said with a sinister smile. 'But let us get on. I have here the names of other Poles from whom you got information. You seem to have made many friends. Will you please tell me whether you consider your methods were legal or illegal?'

'As Air Attaché,' I insisted, 'I was interested in Polish aviation, both military and civil, and it was my duty to find out any information I could on these subjects.'

Rozanski's fists clenched. 'Answer me, was it legal or illegal for you to ask these questions, to make a net of spies, to persuade Polish citizens to betray their country?' He rose from his chair, his face black with anger, as he spat the questions at me.

Legal, illegal, a network of spies, British Intelligence, M.I.5, Skalski, Slawinski, Mikolaiczuk, Anders, Barbara's fate. . . . Liar! Liar! Spy! Spy! My head reeled.

Hour after hour, day after day, until I seemed to lose all count of time, questions followed questions, relentlessly and without pause. On and on and on the devils went! They threatened, promised, and confronted me with Barbara. They used every trick of their vile trade.

'I will read through your statement to you. . . .'

'No, no, I can't agree. . . .'

'That is what you said. . . .'

'Sign! Sign! Sign!'

At the end of three days the combined efforts of that unholy gang had extracted from me the basis on which the case against me was to be framed. I was beaten well and truly to my knees. My own future shrouded in obscurity, I was by then too tired to even wonder what they had in store for me. In those darkest moments of my life, I had only the strength left to thank God that I had no vital secrets to betray, and to hope that Barbara's part in the whole ghastly business had by now dwindled to her advantage.

Defeated and debilitated, I was left for the next few days in my cell. There, tired out and shattered in body and mind, I was almost content to relax. My mind a blank, except for the desultory conversation with Duznicki, I lay and stared at the ceiling.

Then one morning, still partially numbed in mind, the guard opened the door and beckoned me to follow him. As we climbed the stairs, I wondered dully what further horror there could be in store for me. Entering that large, high-ceilinged room which I had come to dread, my knees began to knock. 'Please God,' I muttered to myself, 'no shouting at me today.'

I started back in horror. I think I cried out aloud: 'Oh, God, not that!' For there in a corner of the room was the spectre of a white-faced Barbara, her eyes closed, and yet alive.

Rozanski's manner, to my infinite relief, was urbane and polite. I thought bitterly that no doubt he could afford the smile which lit up his saturnine face.

'I am moving you to Warsaw,' he said. 'You will

be taken down by air tomorrow. I am a busy man, as I have told you before, and I cannot spare the time to come up here. Although I shall remain personally in charge of your case and shall see you from time to time, I am handing you over to this officer.' He turned to the youngish, fair-haired man standing to his right, whose face was utterly devoid of expression. His name was Grzybek, the Polish for 'a small mushroom,' which suited his characterless personality to perfection.

He was to act merely as a cypher in my investigation and was briefed precisely with the information to be elicited from me : he pursued his task slowly and meticulously. He would ask the same questions, in a slightly different form, over and over again.

The next day, June 10th, I was taken from my cell to a car waiting in the courtyard of the prison, and as I got in I saw the waxen face of Duznicki looking out from behind the bars. I wondered whether he would remember the only Englishman he had ever met and who had appeared so strangely in his life.

At the aerodrome, where those few momentous weeks ago Barbara had arrived, a small twin-engined aircraft, a German Siebel, its engines already running, awaited us. The cabin closed, the pilot, an officer of the Polish Air Force, in a uniform of grey-blue not unlike that of the R.A.F., took-off without delay. As we climbed into the sky and I glanced down at the landscape unfolding below, I thought what a ghastly irony of fate it was that my first flight over Polish territory should be as a prisoner in an aeroplane flown by a Communist aviator of a sister Service to

my own. The degradation and shame of the situation pierced my mind like a lance.

After an uneventful flight we landed at a little-used grass aerodrome on the outskirts of Warsaw. Driving through the streets of the city, I remembered the last time I had passed along them in the Humber Snipe on a snowy night in the previous November on my way to the station, with Barbara at my side. I could not help thinking how fortunate it is that none of us can foresee the shape of things to come.

Pressed into the back seat of the car between my two custodians, I looked eagerly at the crowds thronging the pavements, but saw no familiar faces. Yet how I envied the carefree movement of those passers-by, and how bitter was this brief taste of freedom. At the end of the main thoroughfare, we turned out of Marszalkowska Street into Pulawska Street, and I realised with a sinking heart that I was being taken to the Mokotow Prison, as dreaded by the Poles as is the Lubianka by the Russians.

I had driven past those grim, high, brick walls many times before and, whenever I had done so, had thought of my Polish friends who had disappeared without trace. I had thanked God then that, as an Englishman with a diplomatic passport, such a fate could never be mine.

The huge iron gates of the prison clanged behind us and a green-uniformed gaoler scrutinised the credentials of my U.B. escort. In a small office I was handed over to the prison authorities and, after passing through several pairs of gates as impenetrable

as the first, I found myself within the precincts of the gaol.

Built before the first world war, Mokotow Prison is a vast red-brick building, parts of which are three or four storeys high. In addition to the main building that houses the prison offices and the prisoners already sentenced, there are a hospital, a laundry, a small factory in which the convicts work, and the block where prisoners charged with political crimes against the State are held for interrogation before trial. The whole establishment covers an area of about five acres and is surrounded by a brick wall some fifteen feet high. The section reserved for political prisoners is divided into two parts, known as Divisions X and XI. In due course I was to find myself an inmate of both, but it was in the former that I was first incarcerated.

Three storeys high, the interior was built entirely of stone except for the iron railings on each floor and the stairs that ran up the centre. On each landing there were forty cells. The entrance to Division X was through two cage-like doors, neither of which was ever opened before the other had been carefully secured. Now, when I entered and the key was turned in the lock of the inner door, a warder in a peaked cap and green uniform stepped forward.

He shouted at me to come with him, and I was taken to a cell on the ground floor. Once there, he yelled at me to strip myself of my clothes, and while I stood naked he methodically searched the pockets and linings of my suit for any hidden objects. No prisoner was allowed anything other than a handker-

chief. Tie, braces or belt, and even the laces in one's shoes were removed. Satisfied that I carried nothing with me, the warder told me to dress. Then he led me up the long iron staircase, tapping the railings with his keys as he did so. I was soon to learn that this 'tap, tap' to be heard at any time of the day or night was to signal the fact that a prisoner was being led round the building, and also a warning that prevented a chance meeting with another prisoner. For the strictest isolation of prisoners from each other was considered of paramount importance in Mokotow. No member of any one group or faction under interrogation was ever allowed to know of the arrest of any of his associates.

Cell 36 measured thirteen feet by six. Its walls for half their height were painted a dirty bottle green and the remainder plashed with an even dirtier white distemper. In one corner stood a seatless porcelain lavatory, made by Shanks of Newcastle. From the wall there projected a collapsible metal bed covered with two straw palliasses and a couple of threadbare blankets, while on a small wooden shelf stood two chipped enamel mugs and bowls, two spoons and a crust or so of black rye bread. In front of a small wooden stool there was a minute metal table that was fixed to the wall.

The air in this grim cell smelt acrid and stale, and as I inhaled it I felt sick. This was to be my abode for the next eight and a half months.

Two figures stood rigidly to attention at the far end of the tiny cell. One—tall, dark, cadaverous and

painfully emaciated after a sojourn in the slave camps of Siberia—was soon to be roughly hustled away, taking with him his few miserable possessions. The other, below medium height and fair-haired, peered at me from behind horn-rimmed glasses with eyes devoid of expression. His face was putty-coloured and his body flabby from long imprisonment.

Zygmunt Konieczny was to be my companion during the whole period I was in Cell 36. Day after day, week after week and month after month, he and I were to be together shut in this filthy lavatory, alone with ourselves and our thoughts. He had been a senior official in the Ministry of Health in Warsaw and in that capacity had been responsible for the overall production and distribution of chemicals for medical purposes throughout the country. The chemical industry, reconstructed after the war by private enterprise, was gradually absorbed by the State, in accordance with Communist tenets. Konieczny, accused of obstructing this change-over, had been tried for sabotage and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. Although after trial prisoners were normally removed from Divisions X and XI, to serve their terms as convicts, he had remained for further interrogation as a witness in another case.

Introductions over, my two scarecrows in their tattered suits and with the stubble of many days' growth on their pallid faces, fell on me for news of the outside world, from which they had been as isolated as survivors from a shipwreck on a desert island. Every aspect of international affairs, every change in the relationship of the Great Powers, was

viewed and considered by these two men in one light and one light only. Would there, they asked over and over again, be another war and how soon would it occur? For, with the desperation of the damned, they saw no hope of release from their life of eternal imprisonment except through a universal holocaust.

It was with Zygmunt, then, as my sole support against the machinations of the Secret Police, that I was to learn the awful rigours of a gaol and the system devised to break the strongest will.

The routine of Mokotow was harsh indeed. At five o'clock in the morning, summer and winter, the prisoners were awakened by a shouted word of command, and a sigh of anguish swept like a moaning wind through the division as the tortured souls rose to face another day. Then came the clang of the iron doors as the warders made their way from cell to cell. As each door was opened, the occupant stepped quickly into the passage to retrieve his belongings, for, each night, suits, folded to the regulation pattern, shoes, feeding bowls, mugs and even spectacles had to be placed in the passage. From these pathetic piles of battered, unpolished, laceless footwear a prisoner called from his cell late at night was able to ascertain the number of occupants in each cell. That I sometimes saw seven or eight pairs of shoes outside a cell will convey a slight idea of the conditions existing in those tiny rooms originally intended to house one prisoner. But so important was considered the need to suppress even the most meagre information percolating through the division that I was even to see canvas covers placed over these piles of shoes and

clothing to prevent anyone obtaining this approximate guide to the numbers held under arrest.

A short pause, and the clanging and banging of doors opening and closing commenced again. The large enamel basin—one only to each cell—was filled with cold water, and this, with a similar evening ration, had to suffice for the needs of drinking, washing and the laundering of shirts, underclothes and socks and the cleaning of feeding utensils. Any additional water had to be flushed from the lavatory into one's small feeding bowl.

Hardened as one's skin became, the coldness of the water in the depths of the Polish winter cut like a knife. The issue of water and other menial tasks in Divisions X and XI were carried out entirely by Germans sentenced for war crimes. Even the savage, sadistic faces of these men showed the effects of captivity in Communist hands.

At seven o'clock or thereabouts, the first meal of the day was brought round by a German escorted by a warder. Into each small feeding bowl was poured a dark-brown fluid. Tepid, tasteless and unsweetened, for want of another name it could be called coffee. The daily ration of half a kilo of black rye bread was handed out at the same time. Stale and bitter, its vile taste did not prevent every crumb, every crust, being consumed in an effort to fill an empty stomach.

This travesty of a breakfast over, one then set about the cleaning of the cell. With a handful of miserable rags, usually the remnants of an erstwhile storm-trooper's uniform, the walls and floors were scoured of every particle of dust, for Zygmunt with

his medical knowledge rightly considered that dust was an enemy to our lungs. Usually, when we had finished our cleaning, the tapping of the warders' keys on the stone walls and iron railings began, as prisoners from all parts of the division were conducted for interrogation. Nerves a-jangle, each individual waited for the cell door to open. A finger pointed at him, and at a curt word of command he would be ordered from his cell to face a spell of relentless and continuous questioning by the officer conducting his particular case.

At midday, lunch was served. What a grandiose word to describe a ladleful of thin soup of watery porridge, to which the frugal prisoner might add a scrap or two of bread saved from his breakfast! For the evening meal there was half a bowl of swedes or beetroot soaked in hot water, and after that the day was nearly done. But before he was alone for the night, the prisoner stood barefoot on the stone floor of the cell, clad in a coarse cotton shirt and long, ill-fitting pants, stiffly to attention for the roll-call. Then, the few poor belongings placed outside in the passage, he lay down for the night.

Crouching on a canvas palliasse stuffed with straw placed on the unyielding floor, covered only with one blanket and a cotton sheet, in winter the cell was as cold as a catacomb. Yet, despite it all, *les misérables* were mercifully released from the mental tortures of the day and the lack of nourishment. For a few precious hours they fell into a heavy sleep and found temporary respite in unconsciousness. But even then the troubled mind was filled with fantastic dreams; a

safety-valve, perhaps, to the stark and grim reality of the day.

To dream of shoes, they said in Mokotow, was an omen of freedom; but my own reveries never held this lucky chance.

This, then, is an outline of the daily schedule of an inmate of the ill-famed Mokotow Prison. After the first month or so, relatives of prisoners were allowed to pay a small monthly sum so that the near-starvation rations might be supplemented. Once a fortnight 'parcels,' as they were called, were issued, and the prisoner led from his cell took with him the large enamel wash basin to collect the items bought for him by the prison authorities. These consisted of forty poor quality cigarettes, half a pound of margarine or lard, a pound of sugar, a loaf of whitish bread, a foot of blood sausage, and a pound of apples or onions. Not much, in fact, but when hunger grips one's guts a blood sausage can taste more delicious than caviare, and orange peel, dipped in sugar, sweeter than the finest peach.

Sometimes the prisoner might have no relatives in Warsaw, or perhaps they were too poor to come to his help. Sometimes his interrogating officer might find him a trifle stubborn and then his supplement of food would be withheld.

Bathing facilities were of the most limited nature. Apart from the daily wash in cold water, the boilers in Division X were lit once a month to heat the showers. Then members of each cell were taken down for a wash separately, either any time of the day or

night or on Sundays, when no interrogations were held, and we were allowed a few blissful moments when the water tingled down the spine. About once a fortnight, a small German barber ran a pair of blunt clippers over our faces and heads, for a razor was only allowed to a prisoner when facing trial or appearing in court as a witness.

Apart from the terrible isolation from the outside world, there were two further hardships that I found most difficult to support. First, the lack of reading material, for no books, no journals or paper for any purpose whatsoever was allowed. So, once conversational subjects had been exhausted, there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to break the endless tedium of the everlasting days. One had nothing to do except think and think until the mind seemed ready to burst.

Secondly, the prisoners in Divisions X and XI were never taken outside the building for exercise in the fresh air. When it is remembered that it was by no means uncommon for individuals to be held for two, three or even more years before trial, this penalty was severe indeed. We never breathed fresh air into our lungs. In the summer we never felt the warmth of the sun on our faces, or in winter the stimulating tingle of a cold, frosty day. There was nothing to breathe from one day's end to another except the stale, dead atmosphere of the gaol. With dark-rimmed, sunken eyes, waxen faces framed in a stubble of beard, bowed shoulders, hollow chests and shambling gait, we were the sorry scarecrows of Wiezien Mokotow.

In addition to the harsh and rigorous conditions of confinement, prisoners had to face the methods used

to extract the utmost information and to extort at the trial an admission of guilt, a full confession. All this to the satisfaction of their interrogators. So far as this was concerned, I have it on the opinion of a man who had suffered at the hands of the Gestapo that the latter's methods were infinitely inferior to those used by the Polish Secret Police. Rozanski said to me at our first meeting, 'We have time.' Juliusz Garstecki, my companion for four and a half months, was told by a captain of the Security Police, 'You are now in the hands of the U.B. We may hold you here for one year, two years, or even five years. But by the end you will have told us all we want to know.'

In theory the right of Habeas Corpus exists in Poland. Thus, after three months under arrest, Public Security applies to the Ministry of Justice for an extension, and subsequently every six months. In practice, however, as this request is always acceded to, the prisoner can be held indefinitely. All that one can look forward to is time stretching into the infinite, time without end, time beating on the mind the ghastly refrain—'for ever and ever and ever. . . .'

Uncertainty was cultivated in the prisoner's mind like a fungus by Rozanski and his minions by every artifice imaginable. Uncertainty struck even in the first instance as to the precise reason for arrest, for no warrant was served when a man was apprehended. Uncertainty was provoked by the methods of interrogation. For example, one prisoner was held under arrest for eighteen months without being called once for interrogation. A second was asked a simple question to which he gave a straightforward reply. Three

times a day for a month, this same question was put to him over and over again, and met with the same response. A third prisoner, who was returned to his cell after half his statement had been read to him, was not called again for three months. I could quote a dozen cases to prove how this state of uncertainty was bred in a prisoner's mind, a state that was further fostered by the system of complete isolation from any form of contact within or outside the gaol. After months of solitary confinement, a prisoner began to wonder what friends and associates might also have been arrested, or what was the fate of a wife or mother left without means of support.

Uncertainty, doubt, an infinity of time, what better or more efficient means to degrade, debase and break down the will of the strongest man?

What of the actual methods used by the inquisitors? What further pressure is required to ensure that the victim lays bare his very soul? The first admissions of guilt are often obtained in the early weeks of arrest when the prisoner is held in the basement cells of the Ministry of Security, where continuous questioning goes on for days without break or intermission until the incriminating statements are signed. Then, after being transferred to Divisions X and XI at Mokotow, the prisoner's interrogation continues. There, the questionings are carried on in a two-storeyed building, connected by a passage with the main block. In each of the small rooms there are a chair and table for the officer, a small stool in the corner for the accused, and a padded door as an added refinement.

There are forty or more such rooms, and in each

of them the young lieutenants of the U.B., with hard, callous expressions on their brutal faces, continue their examinations. Basing their questions on the brief given them by their superiors at the Ministry, they relentlessly repeat the questions in varying forms until a reply is given. Shouting, menacing, threatening, they go on until the mind of the wretched man, cramped on his stool, is reduced to mental pulp. Sometimes this process lasts for months. Then, without rhyme or reason, it ceases. There is an indefinite pause in the cross-examination that leaves the prisoner guessing. Then the cell door opens with a rattle, and the beckoning finger of the warder signals to the prisoner. The keys tap-tap once more on the iron railings, and once more the victim is led to the sparsely furnished little room to face his inquisitors. There the same questions in different form are repeated and repeated and repeated.

Drugs, blinding lights, physical torture—in reality there is no necessity for such refinements in this relentless dissection of the human mind. The humane methods used are effective enough.

Lastly, but by no means unimportant, is the belief, ingrained in the minds of some, implanted in those of others, that a full confession will serve as an atonement for their sins. The public admission of guilt by such men as Malenkov and Molotov bear witness to this belief, leaving no doubt that it plays an important part in influencing men held for illegal application of a political heresy. No parallel exists in British justice to the interminable series of political trials enacted in countries behind the Iron Curtain, in which prisoner

after prisoner, submitting a plea of guilty, proceeds to a full and detailed confession of his misdeeds before the court.

No British subject brought up in a country where the rights of the individual are sacrosanct can fail to wonder at the nature of the preparation undergone by the man standing self-accused in the dock.

CHAPTER NINE

ON THE DAY after my arrival in Cell 36, the door opened and the green-uniformed warder beckoned to me.

‘Come,’ he said bluntly.

He conducted me along the stone passage, down the wide iron staircase which ran up the centre of the building, and as he went he tapped his keys on the walls and railings. On the ground floor he turned through an open doorway leading to a carpeted staircase, and as we started to descend I heard what sounded like the echo of his key.

'Stand here and face the wall,' he ordered, pushing me into an alcove.

The tapping grew nearer and I realised that what I had thought to be an echo was in fact the key of another warder tapping against the wall. Then I heard the twin sounds of a pair of heavy boots and a shuffling unsteady gait over the stone floor.

It was still early in the morning, but I knew that those faltering steps must belong to another inmate of Division X returning exhausted to the point of collapse after a night of grilling. We continued down the stairs, and as we did so I shuddered at the thought of the numbers who had trod these steps before, racked in body, mind and soul.

Rozanski, grim, tight-lipped, sat behind the desk, and on his left sat the woman Lak, her heavy face devoid of expression. I sat down on the stool in the corner and waited.

'Good morning, Mr. Turner,' Rozanski said, his mouth curved in a smile that belied the cold scrutiny in his eyes. 'You know that you are now in Mokotow Prison. In Division X are individuals guilty of serious crimes against the Polish State. The conditions here are hard.' He paused for a moment to allow the full significance of that understatement to sink in. 'Your interrogation will continue here. The officer whom you met in Gdansk will conduct your case, but, as I have told you, I shall still read all the statements which you make. Do not forget that the future depends on you and your behaviour here.' He leant forward in his chair, his piercing eyes boring into mine. 'Mr. Turner, what is your future? Have you

given it a thought? Your Embassy will not have anything to do with you. Will your country have you back? You must think about these things.'

With that final threat, he pushed back his chair to indicate that the interview was over.

'What about Barbara?' I blurted out.

'She is being well cared for,' Rozanski replied. 'Her fate and her future depend on you.'

Back in the cell, as I paced up and down—six paces, turn, six paces back and turn again, until I reeled with giddiness—the question-marks of Rozanski's words loomed ever larger in my mind. Barbara and my responsibility to her, England, my mother and family; should I ever see them again? I was in the hands of the Security Police and what would they make me do? There was no respite from these questions as I trod back and forth on that hard concrete floor, or any ray of hope to relieve the utter blackness of my thoughts. I remembered the opening lines of a poem by Huxley, 'There is no future, there is no more past.' How bitterly those words seemed to apply now to myself!

'I know, though night seems dateless, that the sky
Must brighten soon before tomorrow's sun.'

Often when hope seemed gone I used to repeat those last lines to myself and try to have faith in an eventual tomorrow. But for the extra-physical type such as myself, who in life had thought too little, it was doubly hard in captivity to avoid thinking and thinking.

During those long months, when summer changed to autumn and autumn to winter, morning, afternoon and evening and far into the night my interrogation went on. For eight, ten, twelve or more hours at a stretch I sat in my corner while the monotonous voice of Lieutenant Grzybek asked me the questions set by his master, Rozanski. Why, when, where, how? The history of my private life since early childhood, my career in the R.A.F., details of my British and Polish friends in Warsaw, he demanded to know. Points relevant and irrelevant he put to me in half a dozen ways.

This endless repetition of interrogation, conducted without thought of time, has well stood the test of the years since the days of the Tsarist régime. From those long-drawn-out days of examination two incidents in particular will remain always with me for the sheer horror of their happening.

Seated on my stool late one night, my head sagging between my knees from weariness, I was jerked back to full consciousness by the sound of piercing screams from the next room. Driven beyond the realms of sanity, the shrieks of this half-crazed creature resounded through the division all night. Yet no change of expression flickered across the hard, cruel faces of my inquisitors.

The second occurrence had an even greater and more lasting effect upon me, for it was of a more personal nature. One afternoon I was told that another prisoner would be present during my interrogation and that we should be examined together. Confrontation, as it was called, of two persons under

arrest, was not often done, but it was occasionally used to give proof of incriminating evidence held by the U.B. against an individual and to assist in breaking down his powers of resistance still further.

With whom, I wondered, was I to be faced? What spectre of the past would be resurrected before me now? I had barely time to ask myself these questions before the door was thrown open. Into the room was ushered a bowed, decrepit figure in patched and threadbare clothes, with a coarse woollen muffler about his neck. But it was his face that held my fascinated gaze. Hair unkempt, the black stubble of his beard barely concealing the yellow, putty colour of his skin, eyes red-rimmed, who was the ghost who had come to haunt me?

I felt my pulses quicken as Grzybek asked me in a flat monotone which I had come to loathe: 'Do you recognise this man?'

Tongue sticking to the roof of my mouth and in a voice scarcely raised above a whisper, I answered, 'Yes. He is Lipkowski.'

This living wreck was indeed Stanislaw Lipkowski. Stash, we had called him. Gay, vivacious and amusing, with his sardonic sense of humour, he had been my companion on many a hunting trip, as well as a constant visitor to my house. I recalled one Monday morning in October, 1749, when I had gone to his home. His maidservant, in tears, had met me to tell me that the U.B. had taken her master away.

Memories of those carefree days that Stash and I had spent together were swept away by the stark

reality of the present. That we should have lived to meet each other in Mokotow! He, like me, had loved the joy of living to the full—and now. . . .

He confessed that once in the car we had discussed an aerodrome in the east, and now this trivial scrap of information had become a vital secret of great import. How twisted can the truth become when to talk with a foreigner is treason of the first order?

But if this meeting was a shock to me, what must it have been for Stash, who remembered me as Air Attaché and a member of the Diplomatic Corps?

Eight months and more I spent in Cell 36 with Zygmunt; a long, long time for two people to be alone together locked in a small, stinking lavatory. What words can express the utter intimacy of mind and body, when every word, every expression and every movement lays bare the secrets of one's soul? What hidden powers of control must be exerted to control the vicious lash of a tongue embittered by despair? What restraining hand prevents the fingers tearing at the other's throat in moments of wild abandonment? Suffice it to say that during those endless months of strain and tension, no word of anger passed between us. A fervent Catholic, Zygmunt even reduced his meagre diet to keep the Friday fast. I never heard him utter a word of complaint either against the ghastly conditions under which we existed or against his inquisitors. To this man with whom I spent those days of confinement and whom I shall never see again, I must pay the highest tribute for the example of outward serenity that he set me. I can only hope that I, a strange Englishman, brought

some solace to him during those black and gloomy hours.

I have only to close my eyes to picture him yet, chin on hand, gazing out of our cell window at the reflection of the setting sun, hope all but extinguished, yet praying that he might have the faith to believe in a brighter tomorrow. I can see him, too, standing near the door, legs shaking with a nervous twitch, while he waited to be called to see for a few brief seconds his wife.

To every prisoner awaiting trial, his own case is a matter of absorbing interest. The verdict and the possible sentence are never wholly absent from his mind. But such is doubly so in the case of the prisoner experiencing the long-drawn-out methods of Eastern interrogation, when all the doubts and uncertainties are deliberately raised in the victim's mind. It is natural, therefore, that Zygmunt and I had discussed every angle and every facet of my case. The two main conclusions, on which we had but little doubt, were that in some way public use would be made of the information obtained from me, and that the Polish authorities would never allow me to return to England. Such a prize bird as myself, having once fallen into their clutches, must remain there.

Strange words, these, to write, and stranger, perhaps, to read, but to bodies buried in the graveyard of all human hope at Mokotow, no will other than that of the U.B. exists. But when and how these events would come to pass, we could not conceive.

Friday, October 13th, 1750, was a date of ill-omen. That night, not being called for interrogation, I lay

asleep on the cold concrete floor. Then I was awakened by the rattle of keys in the door. A warder told me to dress, so I retrieved my pile of clothes and shoes from the corridor. As the last button of my coat was done up, the door opened again and an officer, wearing the red cap-band of the Security Police, entered. He was to conduct me. The building was silent save for the raised voice of an investigator hammering at his victim in some room above and the padded footfalls of the gaolers as they paced the landing, pausing for a moment to glance through the spyholes into each cell.

On the ground floor, to my surprise, we turned towards the twin gates leading from the division to the prison yard. Heart pumping in my chest and with a host of emotions thronging my mind, I could hardly bring myself to think. A prisoner in Mokotow since June 10th, without ever setting foot outside, I wondered what this move could mean.

Outside the gates of Division X stood a Chevrolet car, its black body gleaming in the darkness. The officer motioned me to get inside, but before I did so I paused for a second to look upwards at the stars. The memory of that fateful night in May, when I had persuaded Barbara against her will, crowded in upon me.

Seated in the car, I took great gulps of the cold October air into my lungs, marvelling at its freshness after the stale, foetid atmosphere of the cell that I had breathed for so long.

Out through the gates of the prison we dashed, past cars and trams still clanging along their rails, past

the people already huddled in their winter coats, and through a world that seemed to me utterly strange, for it was filled with free men and women. In the Aleja Stalina, where the trees were already shedding their leaves, we turned to the left. There in Chopena Street stood the massive concrete building that was the headquarters of the Security Police for the whole of the country. Often, driving past on my way to the Embassy, I had glanced at this edifice, to admire the red and white flowers in the window-boxes and to wonder at the secrets that lay hidden behind them.

We stopped at the gate while the sentry scrutinised the inmates of the car, and I realised with a shudder that I was being taken inside the most ill-famed and powerful Ministry of the Police State. Then, the guard satisfied, the car passed through the double gates, to draw up in a small courtyard flanked on three sides by the five-storeyed building.

Together with the officer, I passed through folding doors and was conducted down a long, carpeted corridor on the ground floor to a small ante-room where for a few minutes I was left alone. I decided that I must be about to face another meeting with Rozanski, for who else but that arbiter of my fate and controller of my destiny would send for me in this manner? But why had I been brought here? What out-of-the-ordinary significance did this sudden journey hold? During those minutes of waiting a thousand questions which I could not answer crowded into my brain. Indeed, I was so immersed in thought that I did not hear the door opening.

'Come in, Mr. Turner.' Aroused from my reverie,

I saw the black-haired, squat figure of the hunch-back facing me once more. A long, low-ceilinged rectangular room, lined with glass-fronted cases filled with well-bound books, a heavy carpet on the floor, leather chairs and a big mahogany desk, held my astonished gaze, for it was many months since I had seen such luxury. This, then, was the home of the tarantula in the coils of whose web I was so helplessly enmeshed.

In a high-backed chair behind the desk sat Rozanski, and on his right the man with the pock-marked face, Antonisiewicz, Colonel of the Security Police. The cast, I reflected, was the same as before at Gdansk, but the setting somewhat different, and the time some five months later. I felt that the curtain was about to rise on the last scene of the last act, in the course of which the way of my future life would be revealed.

Friday the 13th : what a day to make a choice, if the choice would be mine to make !

Sunk in the armchair, coiled like a snake about to strike, his lips curved in that hideous, hypnotic smile, Rozanski said, 'Good evening, Mr. Turner, please sit down.' He offered me a cigarette from a small enamelled case.

'No, thanks, I don't smoke,' I told him.

For a few minutes he sat as if in deep reflection. Then he said, 'Mr. Turner, your investigation is virtually over. It has been carried out faster than is the practice with such cases as yours. A blitzkrieg ! You will be tried. I am sure that you agree, that you must be punished for attempting the escape of Miss

Bobrowska. Before your trial I shall wish to see you personally to discuss many points with you. Your sentence and your punishment will depend on the court. I naturally have nothing to do with that. But after it is all over, what then? When I saw you in Mokotow just after you arrived, I told you that you must think carefully of the future. I hope that you have done so. I wonder whether you will wish to return to England when it is all over? During your investigation I am sure you have come to understand what you and your friends in the British and American Embassies have been doing to Poland, whose people only wish to live in peace and to rebuild their country devastated and destroyed by the Fascist oppressors. Are you sure that what you did was in the interests of your own countrymen? We are no enemies of theirs—not the ordinary citizens of England. We only dislike the actions of a small body of your governing class. They are relics of British Imperialism. They and the American capitalists wish to start another war against the peace-loving People's Democracies."

He paused in his tirade to light another cigarette, and as he continued his voice, harsh and strident before, became soft and almost caressing.

'You have a free choice, Mr. Turner. Do not let me influence you in any way.'

For a long moment I looked into those dark, unyielding eyes which held me against my will. Then, with a tremendous effort, I forced myself to look away.

So mine was the option, to stay or not to stay. It

was my will against the wishes of the Polish State. I knew the answer that I would give, and Rozanski knew it, too.

I stared dully at the thick carpet. 'I will stay in Poland,' I said. 'I do not wish to return to England.'

As I looked slowly up, I caught a fleeting exchange of glances between Rozanski and Antonisiewicz. For a brief second their eyes gleamed with triumph.

'Mr. Turner, I think you have made a very wise decision. You will not be the first Englishman to join the camp of the peace-loving peoples. Mr. Bidwell, of the British Council, whom you no doubt know, is living in Warsaw and is very happy there. Reuter's man in Berlin and many others have come across to us. Conditions are not bad in Poland and they are rapidly improving. Polish people work very hard. You will not regret your choice.' Rozanski turned to the hunchback and nodded.

As the latter left the room, Rozanski said, 'I have a pleasant surprise for you. During your investigation you asked whether you would be permitted to see Miss Bobrowska, and I promised you that I would consider your request. You will meet her now for a few minutes, but I do not wish you to ask her where she is confined. She has been told not to tell you.'

Barely had he finished speaking when the door opened and the hunchback re-entered the room, followed by Barbara. I can find no words to describe the shock of that moment. The sight of her was like the lash of a whip across my face. I recognised the navy-blue pullover and the blue and white checks of her tweed skirt. But the girl inside those clothes was

a stranger to me. Her long straight hair fell to shoulders that drooped and framed her pale, bloodless face. Her eyes were lack-lustred and expressionless.

Starting to my feet, in two quick strides I was beside her. As I held her close to me I could feel the frail and fragile body in my arms trembling.

Kissing her, I whispered, 'Barbara, my darling Barbara, what have they done to you?'

She raised her head at last and with a look from which all life had long since died, she said, 'Henryk, Henryk, how are you? Are you well?'

We sat together on two chairs, and while I held her cold hands in mine, I plied her with questions as to her welfare. How was she being treated? Did she get enough to eat? Was she ever allowed outside? And while we talked, Rozanski looked on and smiled. He knew well enough the effect of Barbara on me, and with what terrible remorse her pitiable state filled me. No scrap of compassion had prompted him to arrange this brief meeting between the two of us, only devilish, calculated cunning.

Not till much later was I to find out that soon after I myself had left Gdansk in June, Barbara had been moved to Warsaw. There she had been incarcerated in the Ministry of Public Security in a cell below ground level, where no daylight ever penetrated. She had spent those months of uncertainty completely alone, and although she had experienced the full horrors of Auschwitz Concentration Camp, she found this solitary confinement even harder to bear.

CHAPTER TEN

CONDITIONS IN Cell 36 and Division X now became somewhat easier. Like the sacrificial calf, I was to be fattened for the kill. Parcels of food, fat Polish bacon, sausages and a little butter that I shared with Zygmunt to make up in part the debt I owed to him, were now supplied to me. Best of all, I was taken for exercise in the prison yard. Sometimes, even at night, I was conducted from the cell and for twenty minutes I trod briskly round the ash-bound circle, breathing in the fresh, clean air I had so sorely missed.

I was still called for investigation by Grzybek, but less frequently. Then, one day, Rozanski sat behind the desk in his lieutenant's place.

'Your trial has been postponed, Mr. Turner, for three weeks,' he told me. 'The British Government has refused visas to many of those attending the World Peace Conference which was to be held in Sheffield. Instead, the conference will take place in Warsaw, where we shall be pleased to welcome the delegates. Our Government, unlike the British, wishes to do everything to further the cause of peace. I am sure you will understand that it would not be a proper moment for your trial to be held while this great conference is meeting and the papers are full of the news of it.'

However much this decision might seem to me a parody of justice, since it had already been made, there was nothing for me to say.

'Another matter, Mr. Turner, which I wish to discuss with you is this,' Rozanski went on. 'The British Embassy, who for so long have shown no interest in your welfare, have asked whether the Consul may see you. You may, of course, if you wish, see him, but I cannot see that it would serve any useful purpose to do so, and I advise you not to.'

How kind of the man, I thought, to give me this disinterested advice. Yet, in fact, at this eleventh hour, what help could I be given? The meeting could only be an embarrassment for both of us.

Aloud I said, 'No, I do not wish to see him.'

'Perhaps you will write a letter to the Embassy to that effect,' Rozanski smiled. 'We have chosen to defend you a Mr. Maslonko. He is a brilliant advocate who has been briefed in many important trials.'

'Thank you,' I said. 'I am most grateful.'

Prosecuted by the U.B., defended by a man of their choice, what chance had I of a fair trial?

Called to an office in the investigation building, I had my one and only meeting before my trial with Maslonko. Short, sixtyish, with his black hair crew-cut, he was a dark-faced little Jew, who had been fortunate enough to escape the rigours of Majdanek concentration camp. With him to the meeting he brought as translator a friend who had spent the war years in England. The latter was a round-faced, plump man who clearly liked the pleasures of life.

I have now no recollection that we discussed the lines which his defence should take. I remember only that the friend had happy memories of London and of a shop in St. James's where he could buy his favourite brand of tobacco.

Maslonko said that he knew all about my case, and this I interpreted as meaning that he knew his part and the cues he was to take.

On yet another day, I was conducted to the main building of the gaol. There in an office my measurements were taken by a tailor, a small, faded little man who told me that he was a prisoner serving his sentence — a fact that I recognised from the drab, grey, convict's garb he wore.

I was to be fitted out with a blue flannel suit, white shirt and black shoes, for the authorities had decided that I must be properly clad for the important part I was about to play.

The following day I was handed by Grzybek the indictment on which I was to be tried before the High Court. With Zygmunt I read it through. I was

accused, together with Frank and E—, of inciting and abetting Barbara to cross the borders of Poland illegally. We looked at each other. So the two others had been arrested! Poor devils, how they must have cursed the day they ever met me and agreed to help!

But the charge? How, then, would use be made of other evidence extraneous to this? What course would the trial pursue? Although we discussed the situation endlessly, we saw no solution to these questions. While we had not the slightest doubt that all the evidence taken would be used, we had no idea how it would be fitted into the pattern.

But the stage was set. The plot and the lines I had to speak I did not know. But soon these questions were resolved when Rozanski came to teach me my part.

On a Sunday morning an officer came to Cell 36. I was to accompany him to the Ministry, he told me. And there, in that self-same elegantly furnished room where I had seen Barbara, Rozanski awaited me. Grzybek and Lak, their task nearly done, attended him.

'Good morning, Mr. Turner,' Rozanski said, and I noticed that his mood was serious though relaxed, for he knew that he held me in the hollow of his hand. 'You have received your indictment and will have read that you are charged with being concerned in the attempt of Miss Bobrowska to escape from Poland. You have, however, given much evidence during your investigation, and you will understand that you must be examined in court on that evidence. It is important

that these questions are answered correctly, so I intend to go through them in detail with you now.'

He turned in his chair to Grzybek, who handed him a bulging file of papers. For the next two hours or more, with an occasional word with his lieutenant, Rozanski plied me with questions, constantly correcting and implementing my answers.

When the time came for me to play my rôle in court, I would be word-perfect.

'I shall see you once or twice more before the trial,' he explained, 'to discuss with you further questions which may be put to you. In the meantime you will be given a pencil and paper to use in your cell. In this country, after a prisoner has pleaded guilty, it is customary for him to make a statement—a general confession. I wish you to write such a statement, which I will then go through with you so as to give you any help you may need.'

Then, looking up from the file on the desk, he said, 'One last word before you go, which I wish you to listen to carefully.' He paused again to give these final instructions their full weight. Then, in a voice harsh and serious, he continued, enunciating each word slowly and distinctly :—

'Mr. Turner, I wish you to bear well in mind that any deviation from the correct answers, any statements that you make other than those agreed with by me, will result in the immediate alteration in the charge to that of espionage. Your future and that of Miss Bobrowska depend on your correct behaviour in court.'

The mystery was solved at last. With diabolical cunning, no formal charge had been made against me for my conduct while at the Embassy, and thus the risk of abusing the rights of diplomatic privilege had been avoided.

Yet in a free and openly given confession, or so it would outwardly appear, extraneous and irrelevant to the minor offence, evidence would be given that would form the basis for a propaganda trial on a major scale. This trial would be vitriolic in its attack against the machinations of the West.

Twice more Rozanski rehearsed me for my part and had my confession to the court edited and approved. Once again in his presence I met Barbara. This time she seemed less nervous and more composed, yet she dreaded appearing in court and the attendant publicity. We were allowed to write each other brief pencilled notes, an unheard of privilege for a prisoner in Mokotow. But I doubt if altruism guided Rozanski to grant us this favour. He wished, I am sure, to use every artifice at his disposal to make doubly secure the bonds which bound me to his will.

Monday, December 12th, 1750, was the opening day of my trial. I was woken early, donned my smart new clothes, and was given a special shave by the little German barber. Even a looking glass was provided so that I could see to brush my hair. My face which, I had not seen in all those months, looked grey and flabby, and I could hardly bear to look myself in the eye. I turned away from the glass to avoid the shame, and reproach I saw mirrored there.

The trial was due to start at ten o'clock, but before

I left the prison I was seen and thoroughly inspected by Rozanski.

"You look very smart in your nice new suit," he said. "You must be properly dressed for such an important occasion as this. Although you will see the other accused in the courtroom, I do not wish you to travel with them. You will be taken in a special car. When the court is not in session you will be kept in a small private room by yourself, where I shall be able to talk to you. Do not forget, Mr. Turner, that even if I am not present in the courtroom, I shall be listening to every word that is spoken. You will remember, too, that I have warned you of the result should you not give the correct answers to the court. But I hope that will not happen," he added with a sly smile.

Outside, the black Chevrolet saloon waited.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE BLACK saloon car sped swiftly through the crowded streets of the still battered city. Wearing a heavy overcoat several sizes too large for me, I sat pressed against the back seat beside Grzybek. In front, sitting by the driver, was an armed policeman with his rifle between his knees.

With my face masked behind my hand, I tried in vain to still the throbbing of my brain. Sometimes, as a child caught in the tense horror of a nightmarish dream, I was able to escape from the grim climax to the peace of consciousness but not now. Soon, in the open court, I was to stand and speak the lines of the

part I had to play as the chief character in this Polish propaganda trial. I was the first British diplomat to stand such a trial in fact, although not in theory, for actions whilst employed at His Majesty's Embassy. No black horrors of the supernatural, no terrors of the darkest night, will rival that nadir of my life.

At the court-house, as we passed along the wide corridors crowded with people who stared curiously at me, I prayed to God that I might escape meeting any of my acquaintances of the Diplomatic Corps. But it was not to be, for an instant later I found myself looking into the spectacled eyes of Eddon, first secretary of the British Embassy, whom I knew well. Sphinxlike though his expression was, I knew that his mind behind those glasses must have been a turmoil of pessimistic speculation as to what he was to hear.

I was shown into a small room where I was to be kept alone throughout the trial when the Court was not sitting. After a few minutes Rozanski entered. He told me that he did not wish me to speak to Frank or E—, and that Barbara was in a state of near hysteria.

Except during the final stages of the trial when he appeared in Court, he kept me constantly under his personal surveillance. Indeed, no theatrical producer has ever taken greater care to ensure that his leading actor did not forget his lines.

The policeman came in to summon me as the Court was about to assemble. In the corridor outside I had my first sight of Frank and E— for seven months. They were pale and haggard. For a brief moment we exchanged nothing more than a tight-lipped nod of

recognition. Then we stood in a line along the wall with a policeman between each of us.

Last of all came Barbara. I hardly dared to glance in her direction for I knew that she, too, dreaded this moment. I looked hastily at her and saw that her face was as white as death and her expression pathetically woebegone. I realised how, even more than with myself, the prospect of the glare of brutal publicity must have appalled her, for she was facing her fellow countrymen.

The big double doors of the court-room were flung open and we filed in. Suddenly we were dazzled by brilliant arc-lights. I heard the click of half-a-dozen cameras and the whirr of the film cameras. Two or three hundred spectators filled the long rectangular hall, and here and there I saw a diplomat who had come to learn the worst. I caught the eye of Mrs. S—, the Commercial Councillor's wife, and she smiled encouragingly as if to give me hope. But, poor soul, I looked glumly back at her, for she could little guess what she was to hear.

We four prisoners sat on a bench at right angles to the raised judges' dais, and in front of us was our counsel, Maslonko, who was defending both Barbara and myself. Across the way were seated the two prosecuting counsel, wearing their simple collegiate-type gowns and without wigs. Between stood the dock, a raised, pulpit-like affair from which evidence was given to the Court by both witnesses and the accused.

I looked about thinking that this, then, was the stage on which was to be played out the farcical

drama of my trial. But my wandering thoughts were cut short by a stentorian call to order as the assembled company rose to its feet and the three judges entered the Court. The first was a professional member of the judiciary, wearing a gown and the chain of his office. He was followed by two others in civilian clothes, who were members of the public especially called to perform this duty. They were dull, heavy-faced men, mere symbols of the proletariat and seemed thoroughly over-awed and nonplussed by the pomp and ceremony of the occasion. This, their manner seemed to say, was the High Court of Justice of the People's Poland.

Now, at last, the stage was set, the players waiting for their cues and the curtain ready to rise.

In order that what follows may be fully understood I must explain the basic differences between the trials of those arrested for political offences in Poland and the ordinary trial of justice as we know it in this country. A political trial such as I underwent could not happen in any country outside the Soviet Bloc. In England, the first principle of justice is that the accused is brought to trial with the minimum of delay, and while he is awaiting a hearing, although he is questioned by the police, he is free to answer their questions or not as he thinks fit. He can even refuse to make a statement. Further, he has complete freedom of access to discuss his case with both his lawyers and defending counsel. Lastly, the accused is considered innocent until he is proved guilty.

In those countries behind the Iron Curtain the opposite is the rule. In Poland, arrest is made without

warrant and without any formal charge. Bail is never allowed, and the prisoner is held for investigation for indefinite periods of two, three, five or even more years, until the Ministry of Security is satisfied that every shred of information has been torn from him. Although in theory the right to refuse a statement exists, in practice the prisoner, worn down by the various methods employed by the Secret Police, makes and signs countless statements incriminating himself to the hilt.

Once the investigation is concluded, then, and then only, is the accused allowed to see his counsel, who, incidentally, is not in private practice, but is employed by the State. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that many prisoners do not bother to avail themselves of this privilege. Finally, it must be understood that in a Polish Court it is practically unheard of for a prisoner to plead other than guilty.

As for the trial itself, in which these well-rehearsed victims are forced to play their parts, it is held in public, not to decide the case against the prisoner at the bar, whose guilt has long since been established beyond doubt, but to drive home to the people some political lesson and to illustrate to them the perils of deviation from the Communist creed. And so that these morals may be well and truly learnt, no element of publicity is spared. The Press, the radio and the films all play their part so that the proletariat may read, mark and inwardly digest every scrap of the evidence and the final full confession of the accused.

What, then, one may ask, were the objectives of the High Court assembled on that Monday morning

in December, 1750 ; what lessons were there in store for the citizens of the People's Democratic Poland?

I have before me as I write, a copy of an official publication, translated into Polish, Russian and English, called 'Proces Turnera. Jak Pracuja Obce Wywiady W Polsce' (The Turner Trial. How Foreign Intelligence Works in Poland), from which I shall quote in this chapter.

The main purpose, in fact one might truly say, the only purpose, of this trial was to prove that the aggressive intentions of the Capitalist and Imperialist West were directed against the peace-loving Soviet Union and other members of the People's Democracies, and that their evil machinations were the forerunners of a third world war. Since this bellicose policy was claimed to be that of a small governing group in Great Britain and the United States, the Polish Nation professed to have nothing against the British and American peoples themselves.

The second purpose of this trial was to show the need of vigilance on the part of Poles in their dealings with representatives of the West on the score that these diplomats were little better than spies, wheedling vital secrets of national importance from unsuspecting citizens. The corollary behind this thesis was to intimidate the people so that they would be afraid to meet Americans and Britons, and so break off all contact with them.

It must be remembered that the régime at the time of my trial was fully aware of its extreme unpopularity, as well as of the Poles' natural love of all things Western. Such feelings must therefore be

crushed at all costs. In their endeavour to accomplish this object, Western diplomats, who were showing a proper and normal interest in Poland, were accused of exceeding their rights and privileges as members of foreign missions.

At my trial, as in all others of a similar nature, no opportunity was missed of malicious criticism of the opponents of Communism, such as the Catholic Church, the pre-war landowners and Polish emigrés abroad, such as Anders, Mikolajczyk and others. In the Communist oligarchy there are no shades of opinion permitted; what is not white is black of the darkest hue.

These then were the motives behind my trial. All that happened in Court, the charge laid against me for aiding and abetting Barbara's escape, the statements that I made under duress, the evidence of the host of witnesses called and indeed the entire proceedings during those eight days were but means to these political ends.

In order that I may faithfully describe the course of my trial, I have taken extracts from the official account to show how these objects of the Polish Government were attained; how the facts were distorted and the truth perverted to prove the case to the satisfaction of Rozanski and his superiors.

That official account of my trial runs into some one hundred and twenty closely-printed pages. It contains an introduction which states that my trial 'has thrown some bright light on the activities of some of the diplomats from Capitalist countries' and ends with

the words: 'Let this book serve as a warning and a call for general alertness.'

During those eight days some twenty witnesses were called to give evidence, the majority of whom I had never seen before. Like everyone else in that Court, they were puppets dancing to the State's tune. They too had undergone endless hours of interrogation, answering over and over again the same questions that in court were twisted by the prosecution to suit the case, not against me, but against the West.

The first three days of the trial were devoted to the indictment against me for having aided and abetted Barbara's illegal escape from Poland. The remaining five days were occupied with proving to the Polish people that I, together with all other diplomats from the West, were dangerous spies for the Western Powers who were bent on starting a third world war.

Hour after hour, day after day, I sat in that courtroom listening to the harangues of Majewski and Auscaler, the prosecuting counsels, and to the statements of one witness after another, all of which were relayed over the air to the Polish people.

'The specific circumstances and the fate of Mr. Turner,' Majewski told the Court, 'permit us to have a glimpse behind the curtain of espionage activities in Poland and to see in its full, disgusting horror, the machinations of the paid servants of the Imperialistic Powers who lead this treacherous work against Poland. In the front line we see a gallery of spies and espionage agents who are taking advantage of their

diplomatic passports to carry out the work of the men of Wall Street and the other warmongers.'

On and on he went, ranting and raving against Great Britain and 'America, and hurling abuse at the enemies of the People's Democracies.

'I am not forgetting the gallery of witnesses who paraded through this Court. . . . There appeared here Count Zamoyski and directly after him, the land-owner, Findeisen, both tried for hostile activities against our country. Undoubtedly they have one thing in common; their class-hatred of our People's Republic. It is understandable,' he sneered, 'that neither Count Zamoyski nor the daughter of a land-owner, Irena Findeisen, felt any sympathy towards the people's authorities. But who was encouraging them, who was their inspiration? What were they hoping for? Their only hope was to get back their previous wealth through another war caused by the Imperialists. Blinded by class-hatred and seeing in front of their eyes the mirage of the atomic bomb held up to them by the Imperialists, they fell deep into the mud of treason.'

Zamoyski, Findeisen, Midolajczyk, espionage, Imperialism, treason, warmongers, atomic bombs; what in God's name had all this to do with the charge against me? My brain reeled as I listened to the fanatical orations of these men who sang to the Communist tune.

Now, suddenly, Majewski was talking about 'the circular of Mr. Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, in which he advised collecting espionage information about countries of the People's Democracies and the

Soviet Union. This circular,' he was telling the Court, 'was signed by the same Bevin who has written off Poland, according to Mr. Turner. He has changed his mind about including Poland in any military alliance, realising that the changes that have taken place in Poland are permanent and that there is no way back for the people who have chosen this particular road.'

Listening to this speech I could scarcely believe that Majewski was in fact referring to a Foreign Office circular sent out on March 3rd, 1945, marked only 'Confidential' and concerned with the setting up of a central department of information to co-ordinate economic information. Now, from Majewski's lips, that simple document became the basis of a sinister plan for the overthrow of the People's Democracy, a secret weapon to promote that third world war that was to destroy the peace-loving Poles and all those millions living happily behind the Iron Curtain!

On the second day of the trial, I stood in the dock to face Auscaler.

'Would the accused give to the Court more details of his espionage work?' he asked.

Under the glare of the lights, I gave those answers which I had so carefully rehearsed under Rozanski's guidance. It was my duty to visit and see all the possible aircraft factories and machinery connected with the building of aircraft. On my arrival in Poland in 1947, I met the officer from whom I had to take over my duties. On a map I was shown many airfields and informed as to the best way of collecting information, namely by travelling round the country. I was

also informed that the attachés of the U.S. Embassy were in close collaboration with us and that all collected information was exchanged with them.

While there was, of course, a semblance of truth in these confessions, for, after all, foreign diplomats, attachés and the like are all engaged in 'gathering information,' I would stress that many of the statements I was forced to make were either utterly fallacious or were twisted in such a way as to be basically untrue. Two instances from my evidence are proof of this :

Auscaler : 'In the accused's opinion, were England and America attempting to provoke a third world war.'

Answer : 'Yes, that is the opinion that I formed.'

Auscaler : 'But in the light of the facts known to you was, in fact, the Soviet Union preparing for war or peace?'

Answer : 'According to the information passed on to me by Air Commodore Forbes, Air Attaché in Moscow, the U.S.S.R. was engaged in the peaceful rebuilding of the country and had neither the time nor the inclination to wage war.'

Auscaler : 'The accused mentioned in his statement his visit to General Anders (in London). Could the accused tell the Court what he told the General of the situation in Poland?'

Answer : 'I gave him my opinion that the present régime in Poland was firmly established and supported by the people.'

Auscaler : 'What did Anders say to that?'

Answer : 'I was surprised to find that Anders

agreed with what I told him. I had read in the Press his opinion on the situation in Poland. He told the Press that the present régime was not popular and was not supported by the people. I was amazed to hear that his private opinion was a contradiction of this. . . .’

Neither Forbes, Anders nor I had made any such remarks.

Except for the whirring of the cine cameras, the Court was silent while I answered the endless questions concerning my duties as an Air Attaché. Then, when Auscaler sat down, Majewski rose to his feet to question me about the two Polish airmen, Skalski and Slawinski, who at one time were serving with the Polish Air Force in England.

Again I knew both question and answer. How had I met Skalski? Through Irena Findeisen, who lived at Zalesie at the same time as I lived there. What information did Skalski pass to me? He gave me his views on the strength of the Polish Air Force and its equipment. I had also mentioned Slawinski, how had I met him? Again Irena Findeisen. Then what of Irena? Was she a tool? She was a person whom I met living in Zalesie. She mentioned that she knew some Polish pilots who used to work in England and I expressed a wish to meet them. So I treated her simply as a means to an end?

I was a spy, and all these unfortunate Polish friends of mine who had come to my house for drinks and with whom I had gone shooting, they too were spies and traitors into the bargain. So was the case for the prosecution relentlessly built up against the

Western Powers, who were held guilty of every crime against the People's Republic.

Thus was this travesty of justice played out day after day in that crowded court-room under the arc-lights and to the rhythm of the turning cameras. And, as the case drew to its protracted conclusion, the name of Barbara Bobrowska was almost forgotten by those who sat silently listening.

There were compensations, slight though they were, for facing this terrible ordeal. Now when I returned to Mokotow each evening I was decently fed and allowed a hot shower. As the principal player, I had to present a good appearance in the absurd drama that was being played out for the benefit and education of the Polish people. It would never have done for the leading actor to face the limelight shabby, dejected and unshaven. So each morning, the little German barber came to shave me and afterwards I was given sufficient food to enable me to face the next session in the court-room.

Then came the final day of my trial when I stepped for the last time on to the floodlit stage. All that remained was for me to add one final, abject word, to speak those lines that Rozanski had so faithfully taught me, and then make my bow as the curtain fell upon this, the first and only trial of a British diplomat ever to be staged behind the Iron Curtain. This indeed was the climax of the drama; this the high-spot to which the eight days of propaganda speeches by counsel for the prosecution and defence and the testimonies of witnesses had been but the prologue.

Now I, the British diplomat and officer in the

Royal Air Force, stood alone in the dock to confess my guilt and to denounce my country. For this purpose I had been interrogated hour after hour, to this end I had been kept all those months in Mokotow Prison.

The Judge spoke: 'Has the accused anything to say in his last word?'

I answered: 'In my statement to the High Court I have explained the situation that led to the arrest of Barbara Bobrowska and the others. I have already pleaded guilty, and now I would like to stress that I am the main guilty party according to the Polish Criminal Law. Those who helped in the escape, played a smaller part than mine. None of them took part in any other plans than those suggested by me. They were not taking part in the illegal correspondence between Poland and England.

'So far as Barbara Bobrowska is concerned, the Court has already heard the statement of Bednarczyk, who said that Bobrowska had not taken the opportunity to escape previously. She announced that the only reason why she came to Gdynia was to see me and not to escape the country. . . .

'Before my trial I had plenty of time to think over what I did and I finally reached the conclusion that Bobrowska never wanted to leave the country. She tried to do so purely under my pressure and under the influence of the feeling that existed between us. Therefore, so far as she is concerned I would like to take the blame for all that happened.'

Having said that much, I returned to my script.

'During the trial the Court has had the opportunity of hearing about the espionage activities carried out by some foreign powers. I was amongst those who were engaged in this work. I have thought a lot about this work and have come to the conclusion that in taking part in this offensive espionage I was working against the welfare of my country, for such activity has only one aim, namely war. . . .

'During the long months of interrogation, when I thought about England and Poland, I understood the desire of both countries—the desire for peace. I could clearly see that my country was being led to war by a small group of people . . . I am absolutely convinced that this policy is against the wish of the British Nation, which does not want war. In fact this policy is inspired by American Imperialism and a small group which is misleading the nation by talking about war against Communism. . . . Finally, I want to stress that now I understand my duties well, and while fighting for peace, I shall do everything possible to correct my past mistakes. In this trial, I have pleaded guilty and now I ask that the sentence may be light. I want to add that, although the methods which I used were illegal, nevertheless I did not wish wilfully to harm the Polish Nation, whose great effort to rebuild its country I so much admire.'

With these words, my part in the trial was at an end. Sitting now calmly at my desk, it is difficult to believe that I ever uttered them. As Cardinal Mindszenty before his trial asked that those who might hear his words spoken in open court should know that it was not himself who spoke, so must I

pray for a similar concession from those who listened to this betrayal of my faith.

Recently, when I read the joint statement made in Moscow by Burgess and Maclean, I was astonished how closely it followed the pattern of that which I had made before the Court in Warsaw five years ago. Its all too familiar note proved to me how faithfully Communism adheres to its Party Line.

CHAPTER TWELVE

HORRIBLE AS the trial had been, at least it represented a temporary respite from the soul-searing atmosphere of Mokotow Prison, and afforded me a few glimpses of the world outside, where normal happy human beings came and went about their business. Activity, however uncongenial, was preferable to those æons spent in fruitless thought.

Once back again in cell 36 I felt the shock of anticlimax and suffered afresh all the stark horror of confinement. With those final words of abject shame still ringing in my ears, my feeling of remorse was softened somewhat by a dull acceptance of my lot and the hope that those who understood, in under-

standing would know that it was not my real self who had spoken in court.

I was prepared to face my sentence of eighteen months, of which I had already served seven, but what, I wondered, of the future? I knew perfectly well that I faced virtual banishment for life in a country hostile to my own where I must serve a purpose, as yet undefined, in the interests of a political conception and way of life in which I had no belief. My family, my friends, the habits and customs of my fatherland were to become but precious memories.

Not unnaturally now, no question mark remained so far as my future habitat was concerned. From now on I would live in Poland. Amongst such drear and gloomy thoughts, the picture of Barbara shone out like a lodestar—a light glowing in the impenetrable darkness of my future. Without Barbara, I knew, no ray of hope existed for me. Having brought upon her so much suffering and anguish, my very purpose of existence was to remain in her country and to dedicate my life to her care and well-being. Our love for each other was the keystone of my endeavour.

Normally after trial, prisoners were removed at once from Divisions X and XI. Political offenders once sentenced mingled with the ordinary convicts, punished for criminal acts, and served their time either in Mokotow or in one or another of the Polish gaols. Discarding their personal clothes, they wore the regulation prison garb consisting of a shapeless, grey cap, jacket and trousers made of poor quality wool for winter and some sort of cotton material in

summer. The men worked in small factories or on the land, while the women toiled in the laundry. Privileges were few; parcels to supplement the meagre diet, books of little choice from the library, one letter a month sent and received, and a monthly visit from a relative which took place in the presence of a warder.

But, so far as I was concerned, after a few days when no change came, I realised that I was to remain in Division X, completely isolated from all the other prisoners. For me there was to be no work to break the futile hours of idleness or to give me any relief from the confines of my cell. This is, however, not to say that material conditions were not made easier for me or that I did not receive privileges that were denied to others. Although nothing could recompense the loss of liberty or efface for me the grim foreboding of the future that the authorities might have in store, my life a hostage in their hands, any relaxation of the conditions in Mokotow was an omen for a better life in a Communist State later on. I was allowed to write letters in excess of the normal ration. Poor things they were, scribbled with a rusty nib, but I spent hours pondering over them. What had I to say? I was well and as happy as could be considering my situation, and that the treatment I was receiving was correct and proper. But how could I write that I would never, never return to England?

I was permitted to receive letters also. My mother wrote that she had been walking in the pine woods that I knew so well and had thought of me often. From Robert C—, that kindest of friends, I received

letters reminding me of the shooting seasons I would never live to see again.

Books I was given to read, and amongst them a prison volume of Shakespeare, strangely enough, in English, that gave me many hours of pleasure reading the plays I had never read before. Other books came from England, from sources I never discovered, and for which I would now like to thank the donors. I was provided with papers and magazines; the *Trybuna Ludu*, the official daily rag, and the Moscow weekly *New Times*, a violent effusion of the deepest red, and other Communist literature. Last, and strangest of all, Pani Lak herself delivered to my cell the thin, air-mail copies of *The Times*. This was the result of a request which I never thought for one moment would be granted, and the copies came to me from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Avidly I read the accounts of cricket in Australia and racing over the sticks. In my hunger for news from home, I left no scrap of print unread, picturing to myself the scenes once so familiar yet now so sadly remote.

My daily walk was increased to an hour or more. What a blessed relief it was to leave the four walls of my cell behind and tramp round and round the circular prison yard. Even in the depths of the Polish winter, when the temperature was often as much as twenty degrees below zero, I rarely wore an overcoat. With a muffler covering my nose and ears, I loved to breathe in the cold, biting air.

At Christmas time I was told that I was to be allowed to see Barbara, and that night I was taken to the Ministry, where we met, with Pani Lak in attend-

ance. Barbara was happier because she had received a small parcel of clothes from her mother and also a note which was, in fact, the first news she had had from the outside world since her arrest. She wore a green jumper with a white fur collar, and looked very beautiful, but pale and thin. Her normally straight figure was bowed from weakness, for her constitution, already weakened by three winters in the concentration camp, did not well support the loss of fresh air and the lack of proper nourishment she had suffered.

I told her that the time would soon pass and then we should be together again. We discussed whether we would prefer to live in Warsaw or in one of the surrounding villages, and we decided on the latter, because we both longed for a garden. The unexpected joy of seeing Barbara lessened the nostalgia and homesickness that possessed me on that Christmas Day, when thoughts of my family gathered at my mother's Berkshire home were ever present in my mind.

Then, one night, the officer on duty in the Division entered my cell. Awakened, I heard him telling Zygmunt to dress and gather his belongings together. No notice or warning, no reason, was ever given to an inmate of Mokotow if he was to be moved. His departure was heralded merely by the opening of the door and a brief word of command. In a matter of minutes, with the tin mug, enamel bowl, spoon and few personal belongings tied up in his blanket, he was ready to leave. He bent over me as I lay on the floor and embraced me after the Polish fashion. Then,

with a few short words of farewell, he was gone. Locked up those many months behind bars in that dirty lavatory, we had grown to an intimacy of mind and thought beyond the ken of normal knowledge or understanding. Then, suddenly, the bolts rattled and the sound of footsteps grew fainter, and the paths of our destinies separated never to cross again.

On the following day I, too, was moved, but only a few steps along the passage to a neighbouring cell. There I found signs of special preparations having been made for me. The walls and ceiling had been freshly whitewashed, there was a wooden seat on the porcelain lavatory, a double window, and a narrow iron bed with an extra blanket, which constituted comforts beyond the normal standards of the Division. Yet for me they were, nevertheless, constant reminders of my subjugation to Rozanski's will, and an acceptance of a way of life entirely alien to me.

In cell 33 I was to spend the remainder of my sentence alone, for perhaps Rozanski did not wish other prisoners' eyes to see the better conditions provided for me. Perhaps he preferred them not to know the eventual terms of my release, but I had no means of telling. I only know that to me then the solitary confinement made life harder to bear. No prisoner in his hours of consciousness is wholly or completely at ease, for nothing can eradicate the innermost knowledge of his present state. There lurks in the recesses of his brain the ultimate feeling of captivity and the imprisonment of his mind and will.

Although every day that passes brings him that much nearer to the moment of release, even that longed-for moment is haunted by uncertainty and doubt. This awareness of captivity, and the question mark of release, were for me ever present, and without Zygmunt as a prop and a stay those days passed more slowly than ever. Often tired of too much reading, I scrubbed the rough concrete floor and polished the walls and windows of my cell until no speck of dust or dirt remained. During the bitter cold of the February days I hung bacon rind on the iron bars outside the window and watched the sparrows tear it to bits while they pushed and jostled one another for position. On Friday mornings I waited near the window, furtively peering out, for it was strictly forbidden to look outside, until the procession of women after sentence wended their way across the yard for their weekly bath. Then, picking out Irene Findeisen from the line, I cast caution aside and, with my face pressed against the bars, waved until she answered back. I continued to do this until one day I was seen by the head warden of the Division and told that I must cease this harmless practice.

In March, a letter, carrying Polish stamps, and in Barbara's handwriting, was given to me. Excitedly I read that after an examination by the doctor she had been released before the expiry of her sentence on account of her health, and was now convalescing in a State-run sanatorium at Krzynica, in the south of Poland. My personal request made earlier to Rozanski that special medical care should be granted to her in view of her extreme debility had at last

borne fruit, and this news lifted a great burden from my mind.

The next month, when spring was in the air and the trees green with bud, I was called from the cell and led down the carpeted passage to a room in the investigation block. There, in a light-coloured suit, sat Rozanski with Antonisiewicz on his left. They smiled and asked me to sit down on a chair that had replaced the former hard stool.

'Good morning, Mr. Turner,' Rozanski said urbanely, 'You will receive a remission of sentence and be released after one year's imprisonment. In a week or so's time you will be free. I have finished with your case and I am handing you over to the care of my colleague here. He will look after you and make arrangements for your life in this country.'

I thanked him for the concession made to Barbara, and asked whether I might be allowed to see her, as I believed this to be a privilege granted to prisoners after sentence.

'Yes,' he said, 'I see no reason why not. I will arrange for you to see her every week,' he added, looking at Antonisiewicz, who nodded his agreement.

Rozanski stood up and held out his hand. As I shook it, I looked into those inscrutable eyes for the last time and wondered what was passing through the evil brain behind them. Was it a feeling of satisfaction or triumph, or merely that another case was closed?

I never saw Rozanski again and heard no more of him until five years later, when I read in *The Times* of January 31st, the following short paragraph: *The*

Trybuna Ludu (Warsaw's leading Communist journal) of January 27th, announces that Jacek Rozanski, Director of the Ministry's Investigation Department, has been arrested and is to face trial for gross misuse of his office and for using forbidden methods of investigation.'

But at that last meeting I was not to know how soon the wheel of fortune would turn full circle for my prosecutor-in-chief, and that he himself would face the full rigours of examination in the very prison where he had persecuted me.

Three or four times during the next weeks I saw Barbara. We met in an office high up in the Ministry of Security building. By some exceptional privilege, we met alone and were able to talk freely. Endlessly, we discussed how unlucky we had been on the Baltavia, E—'s mysterious attitude, her own incarceration in the cellars below the building, and our future life together. After her visit to the sanatorium and restoration to normal health, Barbara looked radiantly happy, and more attractive to me than ever before. To me, a prisoner from the gloom and ugliness of a cell, she seemed to possess the breath-taking beauty of some being from another world.

A few days before I was due to be released, Antonisiewicz saw me in his large, well-furnished office in the Ministry and told me that, as it was not normal for a reduction to be given in the case of a sentence as short as mine, I should write a letter to the President asking for his clemency. This, he said, would be granted, but was a necessary formality. Further, as I had decided to stay in Poland, I should

at the same time ask for asylum for political reasons, and state that I disagreed with the policy of the government of my own country and wished to continue the fight for peace.

At this eleventh hour, still a prisoner in their hands, I saw no alternative but to write such a letter. For me, it would have as little bearing on the truth as the final statement that I had made in court.

On May 16th, 1751, after a full year in gaol, early in the morning I was given a small suitcase in which to pack my things. Then, in an administrative office in the main block, I was handed back the belongings from my pockets which I had given up to the hunch-back late that first night in Gdynia; my watch, pen, ring, notecase, and even a tie pin which I had not been allowed to keep. Last of all, I was handed a small grey card which was the ticket for release at the conclusion of my sentence.

Back again in my cell, I waited, and as I did so I noticed in a corner a pair of felt slippers which I wondered whether I should pack. But I decided that they were almost worn out. Four or five months afterwards, I had cause to remember those slippers. . . .

A fair-haired young man, wearing a grey felt hat and a mackintosh came into the cell.

'Good morning, Mr. Turner, everything packed up?' he asked.

I nodded.

'Good,' he said. 'If you will come along with me to the Ministry and wait while one or two things are arranged, I will be pleased.'

I looked once more round my cell, then followed my companion down the iron staircase, this time, thank God, without the tap-tap of keys to herald our approach. A few green-uniformed warders and dull, heavy-faced German war criminals stood about watching us as we passed through the iron gates of the Division and into a small black Citroen. Then we drove through the great gates of the prison, and I vowed that never again would I enter those portals. Nothing, I told myself, that I should do must risk my return to Mokotow, that graveyard of faith and hope, where I had sunk lower into the slough of despondency than I had ever believed was possible.

And now I was free; free from the four walls that had hemmed me in, free from the claustrophobia that woke me, sweating, in the night; free to come and go as I pleased. I paused in my thoughts to glance at my companion seated beside me in the car. With this mufti-clad member of the U.B. and driving to the Ministry of Public Security, was I really free?

But I put aside such speculation. Now the awful stuffiness of the gaol gave way to the balmy freshness of the May morning, and I knew that soon, with the trials and tribulations of the past year behind us, I would be together with Barbara.

In a room on the third floor of the Ministry I remained until late in the afternoon. There I was locked in—in order, so I was told, to prevent anybody coming in and not, of course, to stop me from getting out. At about five o'clock—how odd it seemed to have a watch again and to know the precise minute of the day—I was taken to the floor below to Antoni-

siewicz's office. He sat behind a large desk, his black hair brushed smoothly back from his forehead, his dark-brown eyes smiling at me from beneath their heavy brows. His manner was affable and cheerful, and he seemed at pains to set me at my ease, as well as anxious to erase the memory of the past twelve months.

'I shall be taking you to a small flat until your own is ready for you in a few weeks,' he explained. 'The house was damaged in the war and the workmen are now decorating and repairing the wooden floor.' Then he said, 'You will need money ; here are four thousand zloties. You will receive this sum every month.' He held out the notes, which at the official rate of exchange at that time, when there were eleven zloties to the pound, represented roughly four hundred pounds. But as this rate was completely unrealistic, the best comparison is that the salary of the average workman in Warsaw was about a quarter or less of the sum Antonisiewicz gave to me.

We walked together downstairs to the courtyard, where his car, a black saloon Tatra, a Czechoslovakian make, was waiting. After a short drive, he parked the car down a side turning and we walked back to the main street and through a courtyard ; the access to nearly all Warsaw flats is through gates open during the day and locked at night, when the doorkeeper must be summoned to allow the late-comer to enter.

On the fourth floor, my companion unlocked a door and we went into a small flat consisting of a bed-sitting-room, kitchen and a bathroom in which there

was only a cold water tap. A cold meal of sandwiches, sliced sausage, smoked eel, pickled cucumber and bread had been set on the table. Behind stood two bottles whose labels I did not immediately recognise, but which 'on closer inspection turned out to contain John Haig whisky and Gilbey's gin.

Antonisiewicz grinned at my surprise. 'Yes, we can get all these things from the Ministry if we wish,' he said.

A year or more ago, standing at the bar of the Hyde Park Hotel, sipping a large whisky and soda after a strenuous game of squash, no power on earth would have persuaded me to believe that the next time I should drink the beverage would be with a colonel of the Polish U.B. from a bottle of his providing.

Soon, Barbara, who had been given the address, arrived, and Antonisiewicz, after a few polite words, made to leave.

'I shall be in to see you in a few days,' he told me as he left the room.

Barbara and I, left alone, raised our glasses to toast each other. Almost in silence we drank, our minds too full of thoughts of the trials and tribulations of the past year. I do not think that either of us yet comprehended a situation which, in our wildest dreams, we had never even contemplated. To us, no story of the Arabian Nights was more bizarre or more exotic. That we should be sitting together, paid guests of the Polish Security Police in accommodation of their choosing, with glasses filled with

English gin, was beyond the bounds of our imagination.

Barbara had brought no clothes with her, so she decided to return to her mother's flat on the other side of the city to pack up a suitcase.

'I shan't be long, darling,' she told me, kissing me lightly. 'I'll just throw a few things in a case and be back in an hour.'

Then occurred an incident, small enough in itself, which showed the overwrought state of my nerves at the time and which was not without influence on my future actions. One hour came and went, and still there was no sign of Barbara. Two more hours went by, and still she had not returned. Poles are notorious for their lack of time sense, and Barbara was no exception. But alone in the flat, and after all those months by myself, I began to conjure up thoughts of the blackest pessimism. Barbara had been run over and badly hurt. What, I thought feverishly, if something serious has happened to her? What if she never appears again? Then every sacrifice I had made would have been in vain. I became half-crazy with doubt and, leaving the door ajar, I dashed out into the dark street. Finding an empty taxi, and begging the driver to hurry, I gave him Barbara's address. But in my confusion I gave the wrong street number, and the puzzled owner told me that she knew no Miss Bobrowska.

'Take me back quickly, driver,' I shouted.

As the ramshackle vehicle rattled over the streets, I sat hunched in the back seat, biting my nails. What, I thought wildly, if the flat is empty?

But there in the little living-room was Barbara, calmly preparing our evening meal.

'Where have you been?' she asked as I took her in my arms. 'In Warsaw it is not safe to go out and leave the door unlocked.'

During those first few days after my release I was happy to enjoy the simple pleasures of freedom shared with Barbara. It was bliss to lie late in bed, knowing that there was no warder to rouse one. What a delight it was to be in a lavatory with the door locked from the *inside*! What a miracle it seemed to wander through the streets arm-in-arm with Barbara, and to watch the world go by, and at night to come and go as we pleased.

After a week, Antonisiewicz called, and Barbara, who did not like him, made some excuse to leave us alone.

'Good morning, Mr. Turner. I hope that you are well,' he remarked as we shook hands. 'I have good news for you. The flat is nearly ready. The workmen have just stained the floor and will soon be finished.'

'Where is the flat, Colonel?' I asked.

'It is in Kazimierzowska Street,' he told me, 'in the district of Mokotow.'

'The Mokotow district!' I exclaimed. 'I don't like the sound of that. It's not a happy name for me, and I'm sure it's a bad omen to be near the prison.'

He shrugged his shoulders and laughed. 'I don't think you have any need to worry about that. Besides, you are very lucky to get a three-roomed flat. Accommodation in Warsaw is still very limited. I have some other news for you which I think will be

of interest to you.' He paused while he took from his pocket a sheet of paper on which some notes were written. 'I have here from a source of information which we possess that recently at the British Embassy two senior members of the staff discussed your case. They have received instructions from your Government that every effort is to be made to induce you to return to England. Once there, you would face a charge of treason. The second item is that the Air Attaché or his assistant here scoured the streets in search of you in order to provoke a quarrel with you.'

'Really, how interesting,' I said. 'But, as you know, I have no intention of returning to England. I have decided to stay here.'

Even as I made this remark, I wondered why on earth he had told me this improbable story. For if it had been true, on no account would he have disclosed to me that the U.B. were able to penetrate the British Embassy.

So ran my thoughts at that time, and it was not until several months later that I realised the import of the message behind his words. Indeed, if I had clearly understood them, this story would never have been written.

'And another thing,' Antonisiewicz said, breaking in on my thoughts, 'the English papers of a day or two ago report that two members of the British Foreign Office have disappeared. So you see,' he added sardonically, 'it is not only from the People's Democracies that individuals run away.'

Not until a year or so later was I to learn that the

two diplomats to whom he referred were Burgess and Maclean.

A fortnight after Antonisiewicz's visit, Barbara and I moved to Flat 4, in No. 49 Kazimierzowska Street. The house, built before the war, had been damaged during the Warsaw uprising and had been practically rebuilt. The three high-ceilinged rooms of the flat were well proportioned and were simply but adequately furnished with light-coloured modern furniture. The small room, however, leading out of the lounge, had been equipped as a study and contained furniture of a much higher quality. It had a thick carpet on the floor, a dark, well-polished, glass-fronted bookcase and handsome chairs. In it, too, was a telephone, while in the sitting-room was a radio. A tiled bathroom, with a shower, and a kitchen with a gas-cooker and adequate equipment, completed the little apartment.

As Barbara and I surveyed our new home, I wondered what price I should be required to pay, what fresh sacrifice of honour, so much harder to endure now that I was technically free, my masters would ask me to make. Nevertheless, established in the flat, we settled down to a life of quiet routine that was uneventful yet happy. Conditions and standards of living in Poland were not high. The restoration and reconstruction of this so devastated country had to take precedence over the mere needs of the individual. But of those pleasures that did exist we were able to take the fullest advantage, thanks to the ample allowance of zloties given to me. For us, so recently emerged from exclusion from all but life itself, the

theatre, the cinema and restaurant meals were pleasures magnified beyond their true proportions. Exercise, which I had so sorely missed, I took by almost daily visits to the open-air, swimming baths, and a weekly Turkish bath when the masseur pummelled and slapped my flabby muscles. Often on Sundays, in a car with a chauffeur from the Ministry of Security, we were driven out into the country ; to Kazimierz, where on a hill-top stood three crosses in memory of a Polish victory over the Russian hordes ; to the birthplace, near Warsaw, of the great Chopin ; and to the large palace where my friend Prince Janousz Radziwill had once lived, which was now a State museum.

These days in the country were a sheer joy after the dust and heat of the city, and we brought back from them armfuls of green foliage to decorate our home.

Happy as I was in the belief that I had brought happiness to Barbara, who had suffered so much, I was conscious always of a shadow across our life. It was cast by the knowledge that I would never again see the white cliffs of Dover or the sun setting behind the line of the Berkshire Downs, and by the foreboding that sooner or later I should be called upon to affirm my allegiance to a doctrine and a way of life in which I had no faith, and to deny everything which I had learnt was right.

During this time the thought of getting in touch with the British Embassy had not occurred to me. So far as I was concerned, the choice had been made ; whether of my own free will or by that of the Polish

State, it mattered not. The die was cast, and the wheel of my destiny had turned. I knew without being told that the official view of my behaviour was that I had acted like a wanton fool and had caused acute embarrassment to all my former colleagues. I remembered the words of the Consul in Gdynia : 'The Polish authorities do not approve of my speaking to you.' I could not forget that no clothes, no food, no visit after trial had I received from any countryman of mine. But no bitterness arose in my mind, for I realised that I had no right to claim or expect help from the British Government ; my folly had earned its just reward.

Then, by chance, a minor point arose in connection with my clothes. When I had left Mokotow, except for a pullover, shirt and underclothes sent to me by Barbara, I had little else. Antonisiewicz arranged for a tailor to make a flannel suit for me, the quality of which by English standards would have been considered extremely poor. The coat was cut long in the continental style. Two pairs of pyjamas from a Warsaw shop, and a pair of suède shoes made by a still private firm and which cost twice the monthly earnings of the average worker, made up my wardrobe.

Then I remembered the suitcase of my belongings left in the Baltavia, and wondered whether it had been put ashore. In answer to a letter I wrote to the Gdansk Consulate, I was told that this case had been brought to Warsaw and handed over to the British Embassy, and on application it was confirmed that the case was indeed still there. I was asked whether

I would collect it or should it be delivered to the flat. Strongly averse as I was to calling at the Embassy—because, apart from my personal feelings, I dared not risk being seen there by any member of the Secret Police—I replied that I preferred that it should be brought to my address.

A few mornings later I opened the door in answer to a knock. Standing outside, with the large blue leather suitcase in his hand, was Philip B—, a Secretary of the British Embassy. Diffident, retiring, he stood now uncertain on the threshold, eyes blinking behind thick-lensed glasses.

‘Please come in, Philip,’ I said, and was suddenly conscious that those were the first words I had spoken in English for months, and the overture to the first conversation with anyone other than a Pole for over a year.

As he followed me into the flat, I saw him look curiously around. We went through the sitting-room into the study beyond, where I asked him to sit down. Just to be on the safe side, before we began to talk I switched on the radio and left the door ajar so that the music might drown our conversation, for there was no telling whether or not there was a microphone inside the telephone.

Awkwardly, we sat and faced each other, searching for something to say. Then, after a few trivialities, he said, ‘Is Barbara Bobrowska with you here?’

‘Yes, indeed,’ I told him.

‘Do the Polish authorities provide you with this flat?’ he questioned.

'Of course they do,' I said. 'I have no money other than what they give me.'

'We, the Embassy, are interested in what you want to do,' he said, a little shyly.

'My dear Philip,' I answered, 'you know this country well enough. It is not what I want to do, but the wish of the Polish Government, that matters and controls the issue.'

Before he left, I promised that I would go to see him one evening at his private address, which was not far from where we lived. Accordingly, about a week later when it was well after dark and there were few people about, I set out to see him. I walked carefully, pausing every now and then in some dark spot to make sure that I was not being followed. Near his house, I waited until the street was empty. Then, not without a flutter in my stomach, I passed through the doorway and up the stone stairs to his flat. A quiet knock, and Philip quickly appeared, letting me in without a word.

Seated in a deep armchair and after a second whisky, my heart resumed its normal beat and I began to think how foolish it was that I should be afraid to visit a fellow-countryman.

'Philip,' I said, 'I have thought a lot since we last met. I am ready to consider the question of leaving Poland to return to England. But before I do so, I must ask you to clear up several points for me. I have told you already that I don't think for one moment that the Polish authorities will allow me to leave; they have already made it pretty plain that their intention is that I should remain here. I am certain

that if I attempted to leave they would rearrest me. In spite of the fact that I have been tried once, I believe that they can try me again on a charge of espionage. Remember, although my trial covered virtually every aspect of so-called spying activities, the indictment was only for Barbara's escape. I don't think I could face ten to fifteen years in Mokotow. Suicide, anything, would be preferable to that. Will you check this with the Embassy lawyer?' I asked insistently.

'There are one or two other points I would be grateful if you would find out for me,' I went on. 'For instance, are the Embassy prepared to assist me? I might be willing to try to escape; in that case, would they help me? If not, would I be allowed asylum in the Embassy building? Lastly, I wish to be assured that if I return to England I shall not be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. I have brought enough trouble on my family already without adding further to it.'

Philip promised to convey my questions to the right quarters and to give me the answers in as short a time as possible.

There was no more to be said for the time being about my future, so we sat and chatted about mutual friends and acquaintances in the Diplomatic Corps.

'Do you remember Mrs. Firth?' Philip asked.

'Yes, I do indeed,' I replied.

Mrs. Firth, although Polish by birth, had acquired British nationality by marrying an Englishman, a state of affairs recognised not only by the British authorities but by the Polish also. In early 1949 she

had been given employment in some clerical capacity at the Embassy.

Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Firth was arrested by the Poles. Tried, she had been charged with collaboration with the Germans during the war and had been sentenced to three or four years' imprisonment. That was the last I had heard of her.

'Well,' Philip continued complacently, 'the Consul received a message to say that Mrs. Firth would like to see him in Mokotow, so he went to the prison and saw her, naturally with the authorities present. In the conversation that followed, it transpired that she had had a second trial in secret, and as a result had been condemned to death, but the sentence had been changed to life imprisonment.'

'Good God!' I exclaimed, 'a British subject! How can such things happen? Think what would have been the outcome of this in the old days. Shades of Palmerston! Where were the guns of the men-o'-war thundering off the coast? If that could happen to Mrs. Firth, what hope have I got of British protection?'

The next time I saw Philip, he told me that a reply had been received from the Foreign Office about my case. They were not prepared to help me escape, nor would they consider my seeking asylum in the Embassy. On the other hand, the legal opinion was that, in the event of my returning home, no prosecution against me was contemplated. As regards my last question, the Polish lawyer employed by the Embassy confirmed that the Polish authorities had the legal right to try me on a charge of espionage.

I told Philip that in a few days I was leaving Warsaw for a holiday, but on my return would see him immediately and give him my decision. With that, we parted.

Warsaw in July was hot, smelly and dirty. The dust rose in great clouds from the half-finished buildings which were springing up like mushrooms in every part of the city. So Barbara suggested that we should go away, and when I talked with Antonisiewicz he agreed to the plan. We had only to say where we would like to go, he smiled, and everything would be arranged. I passed on this good news to Barbara, who was delighted, and decided that we should go to Mienzydroye, on the Baltic coast, near Szczecin. This was once the nearest German seaside resort to Berlin. After a fortnight there we were to spend a further two weeks at Wisla Glebe, in the foothills of the Tatra Mountains, where the River Vistula has its source.

. On the late afternoon of July 16th we locked the front door of our flat and caught the evening train. Luckily, we had reserved a sleeper, for even the corridors were packed with passengers travelling on their annual holidays.

Dressed betimes, for the train was due early, we saw from the carriage window the warm summer sun rising behind the pine woods which were a feature of that part of the country. Then, as we approached our destination, we had glimpses through the trees of the light shimmering on the placid waters of the Baltic.

Once out of the train, we pushed our way down the crowded platform and hailed a barrow-boy outside the station. Piling our suitcases perilously on his cart,

he led us through the streets to our hotel. Private hotels and boarding-houses no longer exist in bureaucratic Poland, and in Mienzydroye, as elsewhere, all accommodation for holidaymakers was owned and controlled by Orbis, the State travel organisation, or by the trades unions.

Reservations had been made for us by the former in a large house in the centre of the town. Here our room, adequately but plainly furnished, had a covered balcony on which we could sit in comfortable cane chairs and watch the golden orb of the evening sun slowly setting in the western sky. We discovered that Orbis had several such guest-houses with a centrally-placed restaurant a few minutes' walk from each, where the three main meals of the day were served. The menu provided plain but plentiful food, but with little or no choice.

The weather during that fortnight was perfect. One hot, still day of cloudless skies followed another, when there was scarcely a breath of wind to ruffle the calm surface of the sea. Our routine varied but little. We went for a quick dip in the sea before a late breakfast, and spent the mornings stretched out on the soft white sands until Barbara tanned to a lovely golden brown. In the afternoons, while Barbara sat in the shade reading, I climbed up the steep path through the pine woods to explore the countryside. Then, in the evenings, we sat together on the balcony of our room, two glasses, a bottle of vodka and a plate of smoked eel on the table between us.

They were days of serenity and peace such as I had not known for many a month, and, looking back on

them, I sometimes wonder if I shall ever see their like again. For during those carefree weeks we lived only in the present and, for that brief space of time, I was determined not to contemplate the future. I simply wished that no shadow should darken Barbara's happiness or mine.

From Mienzydroye we travelled by a slow, cross-country train to Wisla Glebe in the south. *En route*, we paused for an hour or two at Katowice, waiting for the local train. There, in the centre of the industrial area, we walked through the crowded streets searching in vain for a pair of good walking shoes for Barbara. But Poland, once famous for the quality of its footwear, was now in the grip of a five-year plan, and the scope and scale of the industrial expansion was of greater significance than a high standard of boots for the people.

From Katowice, the train slowly puffed its way up the hills on a single line to Wisla Glebe, where we got out and carried our cases still farther up the slope. On a small spur jutting out from the hillside stood the Orbis hotel in which our room had been booked. From its windows on one side was a view looking down the valley in which the stream of the Vistula gurgled and spluttered, a mere shadow of the mighty river it was to become. The windows on the other side gave on to a vista of lofty pines standing straight and erect, and stretching as far as the eye could see.

In the hotel, the score or so of guests fed at one big table in the dining-room. As we entered the latter for the first time, many curious glances shot in our direction, and I sensed that the sudden pause in

the general conversation prefaced a quick change of topic.

Life was, if anything, even simpler at Wisla Glebe than at Mienzydroye. Together we wandered through the pine forests high up the mountain paths, and picked the edible fungi from which a delicious soup is made. We walked uninvited into some peasant's home, where we sat and talked of the simple needs of life. Sometimes Barbara would travel down the line by train to Wisla, a larger townlet than its neighbour, and I would walk down the main road, waving to her as she passed.

It was a blissful life that we led when we were able to forget both the past and our doubts for the future. Yet there was one day at the open-air swimming pool which we both frequented when I was forcibly reminded of the former. Over the loud-speakers relaying Radio Warszawa I heard the voice of Spychalski, a prisoner in Mokotow and a witness in a trial of many senior Polish Army officers. Immediately, my mind went back to New Year's Day, 1749, when he had shaken my hand at the reception at the Belvedere Palace, he a Vice-Minister of Defence and I an Air Attaché.

As the days sped by and the date of our return to Warsaw approached, I found it increasingly hard to banish from my thoughts the question which I would soon have to face. Walking through the woods alone, the smell of the pines in my nostrils, or early in the morning, while Barbara still slept peacefully at my side, I knew that I stood at the most fateful crossroads of my life. Was I to stay in Poland with

the girl I loved and for whose well-being I was in every sense so responsible? Should I remain to be a puppet of a political way of life in which I had no belief? Or should I attempt the return to England, to my family, friends and the life I knew and loved? If I applied to leave, what would be the cost? Ten years in a Polish gaol? Dear God! Anything but that.

I had not mentioned a word of this inner struggle to Barbara during the idyllic days I have described, but all the time I was conscious of a desperate inner conflict as to whether I should go or stay. Those dark days in the Mokotow had gradually faded in the sunshine of our holiday and our happy life together. Whatever those devils had done to my mind in the darkness of my cell and in their terrible interrogations was now dimmed. I was a man again. I was my normal self. I was, indeed, a patriotic Englishman and I felt that my duty was to go home.

The final day of our stay came at last, and we caught an evening train at the local station to Katowice, where we had the good fortune to secure two first-class sleepers.

In the still hours of a Sunday morning (why do trains of all nations arrive at the crack of dawn?), we drove in a taxi to our flat. Barbara, bronzed, well and laughing, was happy to be back, so that I had not the courage to broach the subject that was uppermost in my mind; a decision doubly hard to make because it could not be wholly right.

The evening after our return to Warsaw I went at a late hour to Philip's flat, and gave him my decision.

'I will come to the Embassy tomorrow with a view to returning to England,' I told him.

At the same time, I asked that I might be accommodated with some member of the Embassy staff so that in the event of my arrest it would be more invidious for the Security Police to approach me without a warrant, as was their usual custom. I pointed out that to be taken back to Mokotow was grim enough, but that if this should happen without reason being given, it would be beyond my endurance.

Philip said that he would refer my request to his superiors.

On August 16th, catching a tram which went down the Stalin Avenue, I got off on the corner near the Embassy building. Walking through the large wrought-iron gates through which I had so often driven in the Humber Snipe, I felt a stranger, a pariah almost, on this ground that ranked as British soil.

In a consular office upstairs, after a short preliminary conversation, I made a sworn affidavit declaring my intention of returning to Great Britain and asking for the assistance of the Embassy in obtaining an exit visa. Then, in company with a Second Secretary, whom I had not met before, I was driven to the headquarters of the City Police. After a few minutes' waiting, we were ushered into a small office where my companion briefly stated that my passport was held by the Polish authorities and that he would be grateful for its return, together with an exit visa from the country.

The short, swarthy, uniformed official was polite

but non-committal. He made a note of my name, and said that the matter would be considered and a reply given as soon as possible.

Dropped from the car, I was determined that my next step must be to inform the Ministry of Public Security, for even if the latter had not already heard from the police, they would soon do so. I thought it essential that I should see Antonisiewicz personally.

In a matter of minutes I was being conducted to his room. But instead of Antonisiewicz, there, sitting behind the desk, was the night intruder into my cabin aboard the *Baltavia*; the man with the close-cropped black hair and the light-coloured coat. He explained that Antonisiewicz was on leave and that he was acting in his place. What could he do for me? he asked.

'I have been to the British Embassy,' I said. 'I wish to return to England. I appreciate the conditions and the treatment you have given me, but . . .' I hesitated as I searched for words in Polish to express myself, 'it would be too great a punishment to remain here all my life.'

The moment I had mentioned the Embassy, I noticed a flicker of annoyance pass over his almost inscrutable face.

'We are not on friendly terms with the Embassy. They have done us much harm,' he said sharply. 'If you return to England there will be a great deal of trouble in store for you. We have already warned you of that, in any case. Aren't you happy here? We look after you well. You have been given plenty of money, and live better than most people.'

Stumblingly I again refuted any suggestion that I had complaints on that score, and argued that surely I had the right to change my mind about staying for ever in Poland.

Back in the flat, I found Barbara worried by my long and unexpected absence. What had happened? What had I been doing? Had I had any food? She fired the questions at me with anxious eyes. In answering them I faced the cruellest and most unhappy task of my life, and cursed myself for not having had the courage to brave the issue earlier. Now my actions would seem doubly brutal by reason of their apparent suddenness.

In reflection afterwards I shall always condemn myself for this terrible lack of consideration.

'Darling,' I blurted out, 'I have something to tell you which will upset you. I have had to make the greatest decision of my life and the most awful choice. You know that I cannot believe in what goes on in this country. I do not know what they are going to ask me to do or say. They may be things which I detest as wrong and untrue. So I have been to the British Embassy to ask their help in leaving the country. Darling, I know what this means to you. I am terribly, terribly sorry,' I added almost with a cry.

As the import of my words gradually sank in, the blood drained from Barbara's face until it was ashen pale. Then, burying her face in her hands, she whispered, 'If you leave me, I shall be finished. I cannot go home. But if it is for your happiness, you must go.' That was all, she said. Never did she speak one

word of reproach. No hint of bitterness ever showed in her manner towards me. I knew, then, that I was facing the bravest woman I had ever met. In suffering that mortal blow she showed a courage and an unselfishness which I have never before or since encountered. Hers was a complete and utter disregard for self that is rare indeed in this world today.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SEVERAL TIMES during the following weeks I either called at the Ministry of Public Security or telephoned to ask whether a decision had been reached as to my future. I also looked in once or twice to see Philip, who told me that no answer had yet been received from the Foreign Office giving permission for me to be put up at the house of any member of the Embassy.

By now I was very short of money, as the allowance from the Security Police had virtually ceased, so I enquired whether the Embassy would help me. I was informed that they would be willing to do so provided I gave a written undertaking to repay the money. The

official rate of exchange of eleven zloties to the pound was a completely unrealistic figure, for a simple meal in a small restaurant at that rate would have cost over two pounds. I could not, therefore, accept a financial commitment which would have so quickly reached astronomical proportions.

As each day passed without news, the suspense and tension in my mind increased. I could hardly bear to meet the look in Barbara's eyes. Sometimes I almost wished that she would upbraid me for deserting her. But all through those days of tension, when she must have been inwardly in a turmoil, she appeared calm and perfectly controlled.

Thoughts of Mokotow began once more to loom like spectres in my brain. Black visions of that living sepulchre woke me in the night, so that I could not sleep again. In the day, however, out in the warm September air, that blind optimism which has too often quenched in me the sane light of reason, returned. I was a British citizen, I told myself; I had asked my Embassy for help, and there was no reason why I should not be allowed to return. A free man does not hear the keys turning in the lock.

On September 16th the telephone rang in the study, and a voice asked me to call at the Ministry of Security.

The sun shone brightly through the windows of the pleasantly furnished office on the third floor. Behind the desk sat the heavy-shouldered, deep-chested figure of the colonel whose name I shall never know. Pani Lak, a grim reminder of my hours of investigation, was beside him.

'Good morning, Mr. Turner,' the colonel said. 'Do you still wish to return to England? Have you quite made up your mind?'

'Yes,' I answered. 'I am quite certain. I am a British citizen and I have the right to leave Poland. I do not want to remain in this country for the rest of my life.'

'I understand.' He gave me an intent and searching look, and without a further word got up from his chair and left the room.

For half an hour or more Pani Lak and I maintained a desultory conversation. She was a dull, forbidding woman and we had no interests in common, yet during that time of waiting I felt that I must talk, say anything and do anything to relieve the insufferable suspense.

The door opened and the colonel entered. Involuntarily I stood up and faced him, the dread question unspoken on my lips.

In a few quick strides he was across the room. Then he uttered, in a sharp, harsh tone, words that will remain for ever indelibly impressed on my mind: 'Decyzja jest trzymac pana.' ('The decision is to arrest you.')

I could not believe the words I heard. The room felt suddenly stifflingly hot, so that I could scarcely breathe. Steel bands tightened around my head.

'What have I done? Why are you arresting me? May I see the warrant?' I could hardly recognise the sound of my own voice asking these questions.

'Mr. Turner, you will be shown the warrant later. During your investigation you will find out why you have been arrested.'

'If I had known this was to happen to me—if you had told me, I would not have asked to leave Poland.'

The colonel looked at me with cold eyes. 'That would have been blackmail, Mr. Turner,' he said.

Questions were just words wasted. I knew that I would get no proper answer. Arrested a second time without a word of explanation, the result was, as indeed I had always known in my inner mind, inevitable. Blind optimism, faith in the power of the British Embassy and detestation of political servitude, these were but crazy beliefs founded on sand to be buried in the grave of hope.

Once more my tie and braces were handed over, together with my personal belongings. Once more I sat between two close-cropped thugs in the back seat of a black Citroen saloon. And in a matter of minutes the high iron gates of Mokotow closed behind me. Again the strident voice of the warder cursed me as he stripped and searched me. The stale foetid smell of Division X rose once more to sicken me, once more I saw the pallid, corpse-like faces of the German war criminals and heard the tap, tap, tap of those dreaded keys.

Never, never again, I had sworn to myself, and yet in four short months I had returned to rot behind those same high walls. It was then that in a sudden flash of memory I saw those worn-out slippers in the corner of Cell 33: a forecast of return and the omen of disaster.

I was taken first to an empty cell on the top floor, normally used for investigation when the main offices were full. Pacing the floor up and down, up and down,

I saw no ray of hope or light, nothing but stark reality faced me now. Arrested without warrant, guilty of espionage, incarcerated again in the division of prisoners awaiting trial, the U.B. foiled in their project of retaining me in Poland, I searched in vain for some break in the dark clouds and found no gap in the nimbus of my despair.

'The night is dark and I am far from home. . . . Bitterly I recalled those lines.

I looked into dark-brown, bespectacled eyes, sunk in a narrow, hollow-cheeked face covered with heavy black stubble.

'Juliusz Garsztecki,' the man said as we shook hands in a cell on the ground floor. The black, stained walls, from which all but the merest vestige of distemper and paint had flaked away, reflected no light, so that the cell, even at midday, was dark. It was, in fact, the dirtiest and dreariest lavatory I had ever lived in. Even its windows I noticed had been covered with slats of frosted glass, through whose opaqueness it was impossible to see out.

Juliusz had a story to tell that was as strange as any I have ever heard. On the outbreak of war he had joined the army and seen action before Poland was overrun by the Germans. After being taken prisoner, he jumped out of a train and returned to Warsaw. There he joined the A.K., the underground movement controlled by the Government in exile in London. He lived and fought through the savage Nazi occupation of the city and took an active part in the fatal uprising of 1944, during which the greater part of Warsaw was razed to the ground.

Many were the strange and macabre stories he told me of those times. His account of the uprising is not without interest in view of the conflicting evidence afterwards put forward. The military appreciation of the A.K. leaders was that the uprising was a military suicide, but they were overruled by orders from London. During the fighting, the supplies, both in quality and quantity, dropped by the Soviet PO-2, a small biplane, were superior to those flown hundreds of miles at the most appalling cost by the R.A.F. four-engined aircraft from Italy. Further, he told me that the Polish troops serving with the Russians established a bridgehead over the Vistula, but the A.K. commander refused their co-operation, so that they consequently withdrew. As I listened to him, I wondered whether history would reveal the true course of these tragic events, or if it would remain servant of the conflicting political doctrines?

When Warsaw fell, Juliusz told me that he was taken prisoner for the second time by the Germans. Released again by the advancing Soviet army, he joined the Polish Corps and fought against the Nazis until their final defeat. At the end of the war he became a member of the unit in Italy dealing with the repatriation of Poles who had served under General Anders. He told of how those who elected to return were often beaten up.

After eighteen months in Rome, Juliusz was transferred to the Polish Embassy in Paris, where he served another year and a half as a diplomat. On February 10th, 1949, he said good-bye to his wife and small son and flew back to Warsaw on a short official visit,

taking with him the diplomatic mail. On arrival at Okencie Airport, he was met by two members of the Secret Police, who said that he was to accompany them to the Ministry where they wished to ask him a few questions, after which there was no doubt that he would be allowed to proceed. The opposite, however, proved to be the case, for he was soon informed by a U.B. officer that he was in their hands and would remain so until he had told them everything they wished to know. No warrant, as usual, was served on him, and he told me that so varied and obscure was most of his original questioning that not for three or four months was he able to be sure why he had been apprehended.

In the A.K. he had been a junior member of the counter-espionage section of the headquarters. There, in addition to gathering information against the Germans, similar action was taken in respect of their fellow-Poles serving in the A.L., the Communist-sponsored underground. From this information, which it was Juliusz's responsibility to obtain, punitive measures, including execution, were taken against the A.L.

Juliusz therefore reckoned that he would, if brought to trial, be charged as a war criminal. Gifted, he spoke six languages, and had ambitions to become a writer. Because of this, in prison he sorely missed the books he loved to read. But, fortunately for him, he was a great thinker and was able to remain motionless for hours at a time in silent contemplation, building up the plot of the novel he would one day write.

When I told him part of my story he was amazed at my obtuseness in not sensing the import behind what Antonisiewicz had told me.

'Surely you should have understood that he was conveying to you politely what would happen if you failed to obey the wishes of his Ministry?' he queried. 'No Pole would utter a threat other than by indirect implication.'

I realised, then, only too well the truth of what he said.

We talked for hours on many subjects on which he was well informed : philosophy, religion, and, in particular, the teachings of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order. Juliusz had been for some time in a cell with a Jesuit priest and had learnt much from him. I, too, came to see the importance of quiet meditation in the evening of the day.

Juliusz told me, too, of Loyola's precepts in reaching a decision when the mind and the conscience must both play their part. Perhaps I, who in life had thought too little before taking hasty and precipitate action, came to understand my faults more clearly and gained some benefit for the future. In those dark days I tried to accept the belief that God's ways were not always clear, but, however hard to bear, they were for the ultimate good of the individual.

There was one point on which we could never agree. Juliusz, a victim in the hardest sense, would not accept my condemnation of the methods of the Secret Police or their complete disregard of the rights of the individual. He reasoned that if the security of the State was threatened, no other argument or

consideration must intervene. Discussion on this subject was useless, as we had no common line of thought, so we dropped it altogether. Although I believed in all sincerity that my point of view was right, so also did he. I wondered, then, at the characteristic of the English race by which it considers itself sometimes as a people whose ways are always so very, very right.

Although the four months I had spent in freedom had done much to restore my health, the sudden deprivation of fresh air and exercise was a punishment severe indeed. Every day Juliusz and I paced our cell until we were exhausted and giddy. Then we scratched on the wall the daily count. On one occasion, left alone, I made 4,500 turns, which we reckoned was the equivalent of fifteen miles. Since those days, I can no longer visit the Zoo and see a lone wolf in his cage pacing from end to end without experiencing a shudder of recollection.

At the end of two months or so without a view of the sky or a breath of fresh air, we were led out from our cell to the yard behind the investigation building. There, three bricked pens, about thirty yards by ten, had been constructed, so that the prisoners from Divisions X and XI could exercise without fear of meeting or recognition. Short as was the time allowed, a bare fifteen minutes or so, the relief of leaving even for that brief spell the shadows of the cell was enormous.

On no occasion since my return to Mokotow had I been called for questioning. I was left in complete and utter ignorance of the basic reason for my arrest,

and the statement that I should be shown the warrant was without substance. Confined as I was in that part of the prison reserved for those awaiting trial, I could only assume that the authorities would exercise their legal right of arraigning me for espionage. The corollary that this would entail a sentence of ten or fifteen years in a Polish prison amounted to the virtual extinction of life itself. Such a prospect filled me with a despair so abject that no words can describe the depths of gloom to which I sank.

One slender hope, however, buoyed up both Juliusz and me from losing all faith in an eventual tomorrow: Poland, of all the countries behind the Iron Curtain, had had no amnesty of criminals since the war. Although the strictest segregation of the occupants of our division was enforced, a slender line of communication nevertheless existed between the prisoners through tapping on the walls in prison Morse. We used the ordinary Morse code, except that we replaced the dash by two dots in quick succession.

For months, this grapevine had been alive with the conjectured terms of the amnesty and the various dates on which it might be announced. Even the feeblest flicker of hope lightened our darkness.

Mention of this line of communication between the occupants of the cells in our division reminds me that, when I returned to Mokotow, I noticed that a modification had been carried out to the lavatory, a metal lattice having been inserted into the old-fashioned bowl-type runway. Previously, prisoners had found that by scooping out the water with a tin mug it was possible to speak down the pipe to the occupants of

the cell below. This ruse had been discovered by the warders, with the result that the lattice had been fitted to prevent its continuance.

Late summer had turned to autumn, and autumn to winter. The first snow lay on the ground, and temperatures had already fallen well below zero. The cell was bitterly cold. Sometimes at night, lying on the hard concrete floor with only a thin straw mattress beneath me, and covered by a threadbare blanket, calls of nature compelled me to get up half a dozen times or more. Often, while I stood over the lavatory, limbs stiff with cold, the light was switched on and I saw the eye of the night warder watching me through the judas window. Roused at five o'clock, three hours before the first light of the wintry dawn filtered through the frosted glass window, we rose, heads heavy, bones aching, to live through another interminable day exactly like its predecessor. We drank our dark acorn coffee, soaked the sour rye bread in the thin porridge or soup of watery swedes, and scraped our tin bowls until no scrap of food remained. We washed and rinsed our tattered shirts in the ice-cold water until our fingers were numb. Then we paced the cell or sat and stared vacantly at the blackened walls. Days became months and months years, and time, man's most relentless enemy, lost its meaning.

Slowly, my second Christmas in a Polish prison approached. On the morning of Christmas Eve, Juliusz and I were sitting in the cell, he on the hard wooden stool and I on the iron bar at the end of the bed. We were silent, for the minds of both of us were

in the past on this, the eve of one of the happiest days of the year. I remembered how as a small boy I had wakened on Christmas morning to feel the weight of the filled stocking at the end of my bed. I recalled the glittering tree in my grandmother's house, and how I had stood holding my mother's hand, scarcely able to wait for the last verse of the carol to end and the moment when the presents were cut from the tree, alive with the hundreds of lights sparkling in its branches. I remembered, too, those Christmas dinners after which I had staggered upstairs to bed, my small stomach bursting with good food. I thought of those happy, carefree days of the past that now seemed lost, never, never to return.

I was roused from my reveries as the cell door opened and the warder stood on the threshold, beckoning to me. Surprised and wondering, I accompanied him down the corridor. Since exercise had been cancelled in the prison yard several weeks ago, I had not been outside my cell. What could this summons portend, I wondered? Surely not the start of the long-delayed investigation?

I was taken to a room along the passage where, seated at a desk, was the dumpy figure of Sabena, the wardress who normally supervised the women prisoners. She smiled at me, showing her stained, uneven teeth.

'I have some things for you,' she said, handing me a parcel.

Back in the cell, Juliusz and I undid the wrappings with hands trembling with excitement, for the practice of sending parcels into the prison, had long since

been discontinued, and this was indeed an unusual privilege.

On top of the package lay a short note from Barbara. It contained, besides Christmas wishes and words of love and affection, one sentence which I shall remember always: 'As long as we live we must not lose faith in a better tomorrow.' Bitterly I reflected how Barbara must have known my need for those words of courage and hope. For a brief second, as I closed my eyes, I seemed to sense her very presence in the dark cell shedding a ray of warmth and light to comfort me.

Juliusz meanwhile was chuckling to himself.

'Henry, look what she has sent us,' he said in childish glee. 'It will be Christmas after all!'

From the parcel we took the white bread, sausages, butter, a young chicken, honey and chocolates, and as we did so the saliva gathered in our mouths and drooled from the corners of our lips.

To us, the taste and flavour of those precious viands was like ambrosia from the gods, so that for a brief spell we became once more members of the human race who in homes all over the world were celebrating that Christ was born.

I shall never learn the reason for this relaxation of the prison rules, for, in addition to the letter and the food, the parcel contained two English novels which I read and re-read until I knew every word and sentence by heart.

On February 1st, the head warder, a coarse, brutish man, marched into the cell.

'Pack up your belongings, you are being moved,' he ordered.

Hastily, I gathered my few possessions and bundled them into a blanket, while Juliusz and I discussed what could possibly be behind this change. It was typical of Mokotow that no reason was given or any consideration shown to prisoners, so that the tension and uncertainty might not be relaxed for a single moment.

After a few faltering words of farewell, I parted with Juliusz, my companion of so many months, just as I had done with Zygmunt when he had left me in the dead of night. In a matter of minutes I went out of Juliusz's life for ever. Apart from one brief incident when a sharp word had snapped the band of self-control and we had stood glaring at each other like two wild beasts, no quarrel or even difference of opinion had marred the outward discipline of our stay together.

When I parted from Juliusz, he had but nine more days left in order to complete a period of three years under arrest. Although no Communist, he was prepared to co-operate loyally with any government which he felt served the interests of the country for which he had fought so bravely. What a travesty of justice and how utterly rotten the régime that caused this highly intelligent Polish patriot to rot away his talents in this grave of abandoned men!

From the ground floor of the building, I was conducted up two flights of stone stairs, along a passage and into a corridor on each side of which were some forty closely spaced iron doors. I realised then that

I was being taken to the notorious Division XI, which was used for prisoners on whom the Ministry of Security wished to inflict even more arduous conditions than Division X.

I found myself seated in a cell so narrow that with one shoulder against the side I could touch the other with my outstretched arm. I felt all the horrors of claustrophobia as those walls closed in to strangle me. Like a drowning man I struggled for air as panic seized me. How, I thought almost in a frenzy, can I support this new torture? I prayed to God to save me from going mad.

In such tiny cells as this, often as many as four men and even women were confined. So tightly packed were they that at night there was barely room to turn round. No lavatory other than an iron bucket in the corner existed. There was only an enamel basin, filled twice daily with water, to meet the needs of drinking, washing, cleaning tin mugs and bowls, and the washing of socks and shirts. Discipline in this division was stricter than ever. For instance, no prisoner was allowed to sit except on the one hard stool, and while he sat the other inmates must perforce stand or pace the cramped confines of the cell.

Acting no doubt on the instructions of the investigating staff, the warders would order a prisoner to stand with his forehead and feet pressed to the wall for hours on end. The victim often fainted and fell unconscious to the floor. Under such ghastly conditions, it was small wonder that on occasions the building echoed to the screams of some poor demented wretch whose reason had temporarily left him.

While I sat, senses still numbed from the shock, the door of the cell opened and a short, stocky figure entered. His black hair was unkempt, he wore a patched and tattered jacket and trousers and old gumboots. His expression was woebegone and his face deathly pale. He was, I realised, the companion with whom I was to share this cell.

A Polish peasant, born and bred near Lublin, he had been moved with his family to farm a small-holding near Olszteyn, in the part of Poland which had been East Prussia. Both he and his daughter had been arrested for some trivial offence in connection with receiving parcels from America. He was indeed a pathetic figure. Never in the whole of his life absent from his home for more than a day or so and accustomed to the hard open-air life on the land, he was broken now both mentally and physically. Like a ship without its rudder, he had lost all direction and purpose. When he was not saying his prayers in a gabbled monotone, he wept silently to himself, the tears streaming down his livid, weatherbeaten face.

'Jan,' I used to say to him, sometimes cursing him to rouse him from his abject misery, 'where is your faith? By the amount you pray to God you must believe in Him, but you are always crying. I am not so devout as you and say my prayers only once a day. But, at least, I don't cry.'

From this man's very weakness I found strength.

Soon after arriving in Division XI, I found out that the walls between the cells were so thin that it was possible, by slightly raising one's voice, to speak to our neighbours on either side. But the warders

were aware of this, too, and immediately threatened me with severe punishment if I persisted in this practice. Poor Jan was scarcely an invigorating companion, so I determined to continue my efforts to communicate with the other occupants of the next cell. Thus originated perhaps the strangest conversations I have ever held. I used to spend hours with my ear pressed to the wall, listening to the barely audible tap of the Morse signals from the next-door cell, and scratching words and sentences with a match-end in the margins of the books which Barbara had sent me for Christmas.

I learnt that our next-door neighbours were women; three confined together in that tiny cell. I asked one why she had been arrested, and the answer came back that she had committed some offence on the frontier.

'There will be an amnesty,' I replied. 'It will not be long now.'

'They will never let me out,' was the answer.

'Why not?' I questioned.

'You do not know the Russians and the methods of the Secret Police. In any case, I never think about it. In prison one must remain strong, otherwise the mind goes and one is finished, broken.'

One night after the usual evening meal of swedes, in which I had soaked the remnants of my black bread, I had an attack of colic, during which my stomach was gripped with pain that grew worse every minute. My groans, which I was unable to repress, were heard by the women. Next day, when we tapped through the wall, they offered me a share of the white

bread which two of them were receiving as part of a special invalid's diet. I accepted with thanks their generous offer, which I knew must have deprived them of much-needed nourishment. That night, when we judged no warder was on the prowl, Jan stood with his back near the judas to obscure the view while I thrust my right arm through the iron bars of the window. For one second I touched the fingers of the woman in the next cell, the next moment I was grasping a white crust of bread. Back in the cell, we saw that a small piece of margarine had been added, and this was a treat indeed, for we were receiving no fats at all in our normal prison diet. Once, straining to look through the window, for there was no frosted glass on this floor to block the view, I caught a back view of two of these women on their way to their exercise in the walled pen. Other than this brief vision and the occasional chance contact of our hands, I was never to come closer to these human beings whom I seemed to know in part so well.

By the first week of March, as various Polish national days had come and gone, hopes of the amnesty were raised, only to disappear. No opening of the cell door to summon me to the investigation room, apart from the few precious minutes of exercise—a by no means daily occurrence. I remained buried alive in the stone coffin of my cell. Faith in the future all but vanished without Juliusz to help preserve the philosophical acceptance of the divinity's mysterious will. There seemed for me, then, no future other than the soul-destroying embrace of Division XI and Mokotow Prison.

Such black and gloomy thoughts were interrupted by the appearance of a warder, who told me to hand him my trousers to be pressed. Before a prisoner was taken outside the prison, this simple process was always carried out, probably to create the illusion that he was carefully treated. Even the Polish public could not be deluded on this score. Was I to be a witness, then, in some public trial? If so, why had I not been called and briefed? Excitement mounted in me as I hurriedly tapped the news to my friends. But one could only wait and see.

Every morning after I had performed my physical exercises in a cramped corner, I used to strip and, with the aid of a glove poorly sewn by myself out of a piece of cotton fabric, I washed and massaged myself all over until the blood tingled in my veins from the ice-cold water. I thought that as long as sanity remained I must endeavour to preserve what semblance of fitness I could. On this particular morning, this rite was barely completed when the small German barber was ushered into the cell. With a ragged fibre brush he soaped and lathered the thick black stubble on my face and then, with his cut-throat razor, swiftly removed the heavy growth. Now all doubt was removed, and I knew that I was to be taken outside the prison to face the world. But still the purpose remained obscure. I waited with my mind in a ferment, and then the greatest shock of all occurred. The head warder, in a few brief words, ordered me to separate the prison kit from my own. Feverishly again I tapped out the news. There could be only one logical explanation to the situation : I was

to leave Mokotow. But where was I bound? To another prison, to freedom? I could not face the thought that the latter might be the answer.

We were taken early to our walk that morning, and as we returned I saw the small brown parcel of my belongings, a shirt or two, underclothes, and socks, standing in the corner of the passage. As I stared at this omen of movement, I wondered again about my destination.

I bid farewell to my friends, and Zosia, the girl with whom I usually conversed, sang in a lowered voice, just audible through the wall, a simple Polish song in token of my departure. Then the moment came for me to leave. As I walked out of the cell, Jan stood in his gumboots near the door, his thick-set figure shaking, the tears streaming down his gnarled face. Poor devil, I had brought some small measure of comfort to that distressed, forsaken soul. Perhaps I had even given a little support to his enfeebled mind.

I was taken down to the investigation building, where, in an office, sat a member of the Security Police who had made the arrangements for Barbara's and my holidays. With him was Pani Lak.

'Mr. Turner,' she said, 'you are being released from prison on the conclusion of your sentence.'

'Conclusion of my sentence? I don't understand,' I exclaimed.

'Yes, you have completed the eighteen months to which you were sentenced by the High Court.'

It was idle to ask further questions. I learnt after-

wards that subsequent to my second release a decree had been passed by which any individual granted a reduction of sentence either by good conduct, amnesty or an act of clemency, as in my case, by the President, could be rearrested to finish his term if he acted in any manner contrary to the well-being of the State. By going to the Embassy and asking to leave the country I had presumably committed such a hostile act.

'Here is your passport, Mr. Turner. You will see from your exit visa that you are required to cross the frontier of this country within forty-eight hours,' Lak told me.

I could not believe her words. 'But,' I stammered, 'during the last six months in prison I have thought over this matter again very carefully indeed. I now wish to remain. I have decided that that is my right course of action.'

This reversal of my decision, hard perhaps to understand, but harder still to explain, had come about during my time with Juliusz. Uninfluenced by him on this very point, but greatly influenced by the discussions we had had together and in particular by the principles and teachings of Ignatius Loyola, and his views on the responsibility of an individual in making a choice, I believed to the uttermost that my duty lay in remaining with Barbara. This decision was no easier to make now than the opposite one that I had taken in August, for the very reasons I had felt then : but there it was. I had taken no action to further this decision because there was nothing I could do. Until this very moment I had not known

that I was not to remain to rot in Mokotow or some other gaol indefinitely.

'Your request will be considered by the Polish authorities. In the meantime, your visa will be extended for seven days,' I was told.

Again I was handed my personal belongings. Again I was given the green printed release slip. Once more the great iron gates closed behind me as I passed through to the outer world. This time, however, no pair of shoes stood waiting in my cell. Twice in a foreign prison was enough in any lifetime.

I gave two sharp raps on the flat door of No. 49 Kazimierzowska Street. As I waited, I heard soft footsteps on the wooden passage floor. A moment later Barbara stood on the threshold: thinner and paler than when last I had seen her, her look of surprised amazement quickly changed to a beam of happiness. As I clasped her in my arms she whispered, 'Henryk, Henryk, how wonderful! I felt sometimes that I would never see you again. Were they very unkind to you?'

'Darling, that is all past and forgotten now that we are together again,' I said. 'This time I shall not leave you. I have told them that I wish to remain in Poland. From now on we shall be together always.'

Barbara told me that she had been terribly lonely, and had found it hard to make ends meet while I had been away. Nevertheless, she had been determined not to go back to her parents, so she had stayed in the flat, keeping only one room open.

'That day last September when you went away to

the Ministry,' she said, 'I waited and waited, Henryk, and still you did not come back. I got so worried that I eventually telephoned to the British Embassy, but they told me you were not there. Then the next morning, when you didn't return, I knew that they must have put you back into Mokotow. I did not know what to do. I went to the Ministry of Security, but they wouldn't let me in.'

During the two weeks that followed, my visa was again renewed, and I continued to wait, as I had waited once before. But this time, the reason for waiting was directly contrary to what it had previously been. Surely, I argued to myself, when I had been in prison before the authorities had used every means to make me remain in Poland, how could they now refuse me in freedom when I asked to stay of my own volition? I saw Antonisiewicz, who told me that, although before his Ministry had made the decision, the case was now out of their hands and there was nothing he could do to help. Then, about two weeks after my release, I went to the headquarters of the City Police, while Barbara sat waiting outside on a wooden bench in the cold March winds.

In an office, the officer whom I had seen on my previous visit with a member of the British Embassy, stood behind his desk. He held my passport in his hand. As I looked at it I realised that once again my life stood at the crossroads. What was the answer to be?

'Mr. Turner,' he said, 'the authorities have carefully considered the matter but cannot agree to your request to stay in Poland.' And with that he handed

me my passport. 'You must leave the country the day after tomorrow,' he added curtly.

In silence I turned and left the room, and walked out into the pale sunlight to join Barbara.

After the few brief weeks of our lives which we had spent together, after those months of anguish and sorrow we had known since our first meeting, we were now to part for ever. Were the paths of our destinies never to meet again? I knew that I had failed Barbara in the end, just as I knew that soon I should see her lovely face and listen to her soft voice for the last time . . . for ever. . . .

In the early morning of Wednesday, March 26th, as the aircraft taxied across the tarmac, I saw Barbara's tall figure standing behind the latticework of the iron railings surrounding the airfield. I saw her raise her hand to wave, then turn and walk slowly out of sight.

. The most eventful period of my life had closed, but the imprint of those days will linger in my mind for ever.

THE END

